■ Business Friday
Humor could be the best-selling tool in advertising

■ Metro / A20
Ayala Alabang businesswoman faces tax evasion charges

■ Across / A15
Pangasinan town vice mayor killed; entire police force sacked

■ News / A2
Nazrul denies rigging election tally

■ News / A2
Rosales top contender for CBCP president

Police rally round President amid talk of restive military

By Christine O. Avendaño and Tv Zamora

TOP OFFICIALS of the Philippine National Police led by Director General Arturo Lomibao yesterday pledged support for the leadership of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the wake of new destabilization reports against her ad.

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

GMA hits back, says foes out to oust her unfit to rule

By Christine O. Avendaño

WITH HOPE than half of Filipinos believing there were better Filipino leaders than her, President Macapagal-Arroyo said her detractors seeking to oust her were unfit to rule.

Ms Arroyo made the said that her detractors "can only sit down and raise statements."

Friday, July 8, 2005 ▲ 28 pages / vol. 29 / no. 210 website: www.inq7.net

HAIL TO THE CHIEF: Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes (extreme left) and PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao (center) lead a delegation of the country's top guns to the Palace on Thursday to let the President know she's still their Commander in Chief.

GMA tells Cabinet: Quit

Cha-cha 'exit option' for GMA, says Ramos

By Michelle V. Ramos

A FIRST version of the Constitution to pave the way for a parliamentary form of government and new elections in May 2006 is "a graceful exit option" for President Macapagal-Arroyo, former President Fidel Ramos said yesterday.

Ramos called for Charter Change (Cha-cha) as Ms Arroyo faced calls.

Ms Arroyo is facing growing calls for her resignation following her admission that she talked to an election official about ensuring a million-vote victory margin during the May 2004 ballot.

"My humble proposal is not for the President to resign, not for a snap election, but for a junta ... not for a military coup, not for an authoritarian democracy not for martial law, but for a consensual endeavor," Ramos told the Rotary Club of Manila.

"Whether legal or illegal, constitutional or unconstitutional, some of those will serve us in the long run because they are bound to fail sooner or later," he said.

Ramos said it was not advisable for Ms Arroyo to resign because the country needed a leader until the elections were held, but he said his suggestion of allowing Ms Arroyo to remain in

President preempts planned mass resignation

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Christian V. Esguerra

IN AN APPARENT move to preempt desertion by her key Cabinet members, President Macapagal-Arroyo last night demanded the resignation of her Cabinet to allow her to initiate constitutional amendments and declared she would not give in to demands that she step aside.

"I am not stepping my office," Ms Arroyo said in a rare address to the nation broadcast on government radio. She said to do so would "condemn my successor" to the possibility of another people power revolt and condemn the nation to the same political crisis she is "heroically unstable."

The President spoke amid reports that two key Cabinet Ministers were set to resign within the next 48 hours and had sought to persuade religious leaders to intervene to persuade that she stand down.

Bro. Manuel de Leon, vice chair of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), earlier told the Inquirer that the two secretaries often were well-respected in business and the re-

COMING... Vice President Noli de Castro gets a red carpet treatment upon arrival from Hong Kong on Thursday morning with wife Arlene.

Noli meets Gloria, Cory, veep contenders

By Cynthia D. Balana and Nikko Dizon

VICE PRESIDENT Noli de Castro was engulfed in a carnival of very important meetings upon his arrival from a Hong Kong visit yesterday.

The scheduled meeting with former President Corazon Aquino

pushed through in the early evening at the Green Meadows residence of Aquino's daughter Ballsy Cruz.

At 7:20 p.m., De Castro met with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the palace shortly before the latter went on air to address

Wrong Arroyo exiled—Nene

By Norman Bordadora and Nikko Dizon

WRONG ACTION.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. yesterday scoffed at First Gentleman Jun Miguel "Mike" Arroyo's voluntary exile, saying it was just a ploy by President Macapagal-Arroyo to stave off mounting calls for her to resign.

"The wrong person was exiled. It should be Gloria, not Mike. He resigned for President's credibility problem was made by the day," Pimentel said a day after Mr Arroyo's

GOING, GOING... Rep. Mikey Arroyo with wife Angelu and their new daughters at the Centennial Airport before their departure for San Francisco on Wednesday night.

'Our Lady of Amor Seco' to GMA's rescue

By Tonette Orejas
PN Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO... Supporters of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Pampanga brought to Malacañang yesterday the miraculous image of "Our Lady of Amor Seco." It is the same statuesque that former President Corazon Aquino had brought with her when she fled by

VISIONARY: Nuns Felicia Sr carries Our Lady of Amor Seco.

Terror hits London; 40 killed in blasts

LONDON—Four blasts ripped through London at rush hour early on Thursday, killing people, wounding 150 seriously and disrupting a meeting of Group of Eight leaders in Scotland in attacks Prime Minister Tony Blair called "barbaric."

No attack officials had yet to release the death toll, but US officials quoted their British counterparts as saying as many as 40 people were killed.

Witnesses saw the top ripped off a double-decker bus near Russell Square down in King's Cross train terminal, and packed subway trains were hit in three more apparently coordinated blasts.

"I was on the bus," said one shaved passen-

ger. "I looked round and the seats behind me were gone." "You could see bodies on the road outside. There was smoke everywhere, it was carnage," said eyewitness Peter Gordon.

British Interior Minister Charles Clarke called the explosions "terrorist attacks", said US President George W. Bush, speaking at the G8 summit, told reporters that "the war on terror goes on."

"We will not yield to these terrorists, we will find them, we will bring them to justice." A previously unknown group, "Secret Group of al-Qaeda's Jihad in Europe," claimed responsibility for the attacks.

In the confusion, the human toll of the blasts was unclear, with reports suggesting that dozens of people may have been killed. CBS reported that at least 10 people were confirmed dead at King's Cross station.

Police have so far declined to give a death toll or comment on suggestions that suicide bombers were involved.

Wounded survivors fumbled at the scale of the attacks become clear and Blair told reporters he would return to London from the G8 summit to oversee the emergency. He planned to return to the talks in Gleneagles later in the day.

The attacks recalled the 2004 train bombings in Madrid blamed on al-Qaida and left the city's residents in shock. The Islamic Witness

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, JULY 8, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Namfrel denies fudging poll tally

THE NATIONAL Citizens' Movement for Free Elections has denied claims of election fraud by information technology expert Roberto Verzola who has been generating his study of the 2004 elections in various public forums and media recently.

Namfrel national chair Jose Concepcion Jr. described Verzola's claim that his study refuted reviewed the unofficial tally of Namfrel, was a project of the Catholic Church.

In his study titled "The war within of the 2004 presidential election fraud unfolds fully," Verzola claimed that there was "massive cheating" in the elections to secure President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory or give her a commanding lead.

He said Mr Arroyo could not have won by 1.1 million votes as the Congress count said or by 0.1388, as claimed by the Namfrel in its final report after discrepancies.

Manipulation

Verzola also alleged that the Namfrel tally showed "clear signs of manipulation through selective tabulation."

In his statement, Concepcion denied that the Namfrel count had been manipulated or selectively tabulated.

He said Namfrel results were based on a tally of election returns "filled out at the precinct by schoolteachers and picked up by Namfrel volunteers."

"These election returns are reports of actual ballot counting taken immediately after the polls close," he said.

Concepcion also said that contrary to Verzola's allegation that Namfrel had not responded to his findings, the group had answered the claims that he had been making since last year and "answered them all."

"We have spent much time in conversations with Mr. Verzola at the Namfrel Quick Count Center where he was a frequent visitor," Concepcion said.

He also said that Verzola had falsely claimed in his study was a project of the Coalition for Genuine Leader Ricardo Cardinal Vidal of Cebu, Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales and Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao.

Not authorized

However, he said Namfrel had "learned that the Cardinal and the archbishops had not authorized anybody to act on their behalf with respect to the elections nor Namfrel operations."

As for Verzola's claim that the President did not win by 1.1 million votes, Concepcion said the 1.1 million was margin referred to in the Congress count was based on a different set of documents known as the certificates of canvass, which cover 100 percent of the votes cast.

"Because they have been known to contain errors or to be tampered in past elections, Namfrel's tally does not include data from these documents," he said.

He stressed that what Namfrel bulletized hand-tallied accurate the election tally result sheets which were sister copies of the returns held by various political parties.

He noted that when Namfrel ended its operations and issued its final report in June 2004, "no political party refuted these results with their own election returns."

Christina A. Gagbocor

Rosales tipped as next CBCP head

By Christian V. Esguerra

THOSE who has expressed disinterest to the position in the past, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales is quietly emerging as the top contender for the leadership of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz, of the Lingayen-Dagupan diocese, said Rosales was a leading candidate, together with Archbishop Angel Lagdameo Iloilo, Iloilo, for presidency of the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, the official organization of the Catholic hierarchy in the country.

Church insiders wonder whether the late-prolific Rosales would accept a nomination when the bishops elect their new leader at the CBCP's 91st plenary council meeting tomorrow.

Rosales has twice declined to lead the 120-strong CBCP, once when he was vice president of the body in the late 1990s.

He said at the time that he wanted to concentrate on his duties as Archbishop of Lipa.

'Progressive' bishop

By tradition, CBCP vice presidents go on to become presidents of the body, a practice that would lead to have the younger Lagdameo, 64, known to be a "progressive."

But Rosales have taken as a sign that the 72-year-old Rosales might be open to accepting the job this time with his decision to move to the See of Manila, after replacing the late James Cardinal Sin in 2003.

"He's enjoying retirement and he already has a retirement home in Lipa. But how come he agreed to still move to Manila?" said a Church official.

If elected, Rosales will be following in the

ROSALES

footsteps of the late Archbishop Gabriel Reyes, Ruben Cardinal Santos and Sin who all headed the CBCP while serving as Manila archbishop.

As to what the character of the Church would be with Rosales at the helm of the CBCP was another matter, a senior Church leader said.

"The CBCP president will always be challenged by the circumstances of the time. Today is a very difficult period in our country," the Church leader said.

Some clerics have observed that the CBCP needs "more strong leadership at this time, with President Macapagal-Arroyo's credibility under question and the political situation so volatile.

The CBCP has been criticized for not making out its position in the political crisis roiling the country triggered by Mr Arroyo's alleged rigging of the 2004 presidential election.

The outgoing CBCP president, Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao, has been strongly quiet about the issue and observers believe his silence was a reflection of his personal disinterest in the President.

With Capalla failing to introduce a position, other bishops have been speaking out individually on the issue, to the detriment of the organization, the Church leader said.

One voice

"It's better if you have only one voice. Even if you commit a mistake, you'll just be clarifying on one position," he said.

Bishops Deogracias Iñiguez, Antonio Tobias and Julio Xavier Labayen have demanded that the President resign, saying she had lost her "moral and legal authority" to govern.

Others like Lagdameo and Balanga Bishop Socrates Villegas have called for sobriety while insisting that the matter be resolved but through constitutional means.

Church observers say Rosales has somehow mapped his leadership on a "divided" Church when he issued a pastoral letter last Friday.

Read during Mass the applause the country call for Sunday, Rosales' statement suggested the call for a constitutional resolution of the crisis while reminding the President that forgiveness also required accountability.

Rosales, who speaks for all three Manila bishops, apparently was not content with Mr. Arroyo's admission that she had phoned an election official and apologized for it 22 days after the issue first surfaced.

TOSHIBA

Proven Quality & Reliability

Toshiba recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional.

Feature-packed notebooks with Integrated Bluetooth™ & Clear SuperView (CSV) Technology!

Satellite A80-P430

HUGE CASH SAVINGS

Satellite A80-P440

Satellite A80-P440

Satellite A80-P440

Global Support Centers

For warranty and technical support please call toll-free: 1800-1-881-0000

Toshiba Dynamics, Inc.

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Satellite

Choose freedom.

Another forfeiture case filed vs Garcia

By Nikko F. Flores

A SECOND forfeiture case has been filed by the Office of the Ombudsman against former Armed Forces comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia and his family in yet another bid to recover more than P202 million in alleged ill-gotten wealth.

The new forfeiture case brings to more than P345 million the total worth of money and properties being sought by the government from the Garcias.

The 10-page complaint was filed Thursday with the Sandiganbayan by the Ombudsman. It included the findings by the Anti-Money Laundering Council to bolster the government's claims that the retired general and his family's wealth were disproportionately amassed.

The AMLC said Garcia, his wife Cecilia and sons Ian Carl, Iñaki and Timothy held 76 other bank deposits and investment accounts that were not mentioned in the forfeiture case filed by the government last year.

New fuel price increase looms

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH world oil prices again soaring to all-time highs, local fuel prices are expected to increase by around 50 centavos a liter in the coming days.

Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya said this was highly possible as local oil firms could soon make their retail prices reflect the changes in the world market.

"The jump in international prices is huge, but we expect just small adjustments, typically around 50 centavos a liter," he said in a briefing yesterday.

The regional benchmark Dubai crude hit a record high of $64.67 a barrel Wednesday, pushing the July average up to $53.10 a barrel from the June average of $51.08 a barrel.

All-time high

The price of diesel based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark has rallied previous products to also soared to a historic high of $75.29 a barrel, also last Wednesday, pushing the July average at $74.17 a barrel, up by almost $5 from the average of $71.31 a barrel posted last month.

MOPS-based unleaded gasoline is now also pushing toward its all-time high price of $65.56 a barrel as it surged to $64.25 a barrel on Wednesday. This boosted the July 1-6 average to $61.09 a barrel from only $59.65 a barrel in June.

Even the Dow Texas Intermediate crude benchmark of the US reached a record high of $61.32 a liter on Wednesday.

"If no oil refiner hikes prices at this point, that will be sustainable as world prices are really going up. The upsurge is really strong," Abaya said.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. general manager for external affairs Roberto Ramos moved in a separate interview that a price hike was a very real possibility right now.

"Oil prices continue to be very high. We're looking at our prices [even] if there's a need for an adjustment," Ramos said.

Exclusive of VAT

Oil firms last hiked their gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter in the last week of June, a few days before the expanded value-added tax law was scheduled to take effect but which the Supreme Court stopped by way of a temporary restraining order.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have risen by 11 times by a total of P5.85 a liter, while diesel had price hikes going up 12 times by a total of P6.06 a liter.

Premium unleaded gasoline now retails at between P50.08 and P51.48 a liter, diesel at between P37.85 and P39.19 a liter and kerosene at between P39.68 and P40.51 a liter.

Hagedorn is anti-jueteng czar

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo announced yesterday her designation of Pasig Rep. Roberto "Bobby" Nazareno as City Mayor Edward Hagedorn as the government's anti-jueteng czar.

She said Hagedorn could start work immediately and could also take on such of officio as the fight against "jueteng" was already part of his job as a local official.

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao and Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, who were in Malacañang when the President made the announcement, pledged to work with Hagedorn.

Reyes told reporters Hagedorn's appointment was most welcome because the mayor was "famous" for stopping the illegal numbers game in his city.

"We will make use of his expertise, get his advice on how we could address the problem of jueteng," Reyes said.

"We can work together, together with the secretary [Reyes]," Lomibao told reporters, referring to Hagedorn.

Hagedorn, however, could not be reached for comment yesterday. It is not known if he has accepted the appointment.

Distributed by Newspaper2Mail

Ship with 238 aboard on fire off Zambo town

By Leila B. Salaverria

AN INTERISLAND passenger ship with over 200 people on board caught fire at noon yesterday while it was on its way to Zamboanga City, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

The 10,700-ton M/V Princess of the World, which is owned by Sulpicio Lines, caught fire in the vicinity of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, at 12:05 p.m.

It was carrying 118 passengers, 115 crew members and five sea marshals, said PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo, quoting figures he received from Sulpicio Lines and from the PCG office in Iloilo.

Rescue vessels from various agencies were dispatched to the area to pick up the passengers who had boarded life rafts.

As of 4:30 p.m., the PCG had not received any reports of casualties or missing persons.

Balilo said the ship left Iloilo at 8 p.m. Wednesday bound for Zamboanga City and General Santos City.

Quoting reports from Zamboanga, he said the fire was believed to have started in the ship's engine room.

"Our biggest worry is that the life rafts may drift off and we may lose track of the passengers. That is why we are scrambling to send rescue vessels to the area," Balilo said.

By 3:30 p.m., the PCG's BRP Davao del Norte had reached the area and was picking up passengers, Balilo said.

The PCG also sent the BRP Pampanga from Cebu to help put out the blaze since the boat has firefighting capabilities.

Balilo said fishermen in the area also came to the passengers' rescue and were expected to bring them to Siocon.

Sulpicio Lines sent another of its ships, the Prince of the Caribbean, to pick up the passengers.

PCG commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan also called on the Philippine Navy and the Philippine Air Force for assistance. Balilo said United States light sea craft that were in Zamboanga City were reported to be on their way to the area.

The M/V Princess of the World has a gross tonnage of 10,709.39 and can carry 1,994 passengers, according to the Sulpicio Lines website (www.sulpiciolines.com).

It has a basketball court, beauty salon, disco, cafeteria, gym, gift shop, playground and karaoke bar.

The last big fire to hit a passenger vessel occurred on Feb. 27, 2004, when the SuperFerry 14 was firebombed.

Over 100 people died or went missing after an explosion and then a fire swept through the 10,000-ton ship, causing it to partially sink. The ship had been carrying over 800 people at the time.

GMA congratulates RP artist for award-winning portrait

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday congratulated Filipino painter Romulo Galicano, for winning the prestigious Draper Grand Prize by the Portrait Society of America in Washington D.C. last May.

Galicano presented to the President a compilation of his paintings and a photo of the winning 30" x 40" oil painting, titled "Eddie," at the Music Museum Room in Malacañang.

A resident of Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Galicano is the second Filipino who won the contest. The late painter Juan Luna, whose "Spolarium" was painted 123 years ago, also won recognition.

Galicano bested 2,000 other painters from all over the world in this year's Portrait Society of America awards.

He was also awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Portrait Society of America in 2004.

"This is one good news at this time... Filipino artists are really talented and at par with international artists," National Commission on Culture and Arts chairman Ambeth Ocampo said in an interview.

"Eddie," the man in the portrait is "a client," Galicano said.

Erap: I'll take presidency, if...

By Nelson F. Flores

FORMER President Joseph Estrada yesterday said he would reassume the presidency if the people demand it, even as he stressed that he was no longer interested in pursuing the lost years of his presidency.

Speaking through his mouthpiece, former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, Estrada, who is on trial for plunder in the Sandiganbayan, said he would support whoever succeeds President Macapagal-Arroyo if she resigns or is removed from power.

"I categorically state that I am not after regaining the lost, stolen years of my legitimate presidency. I will unequivocally support whoever is destined to be the new and popular leader of our people. I believe that the circumstances and events unfolding before us at present will define who this new leader will be," Estrada said.

At the same time, he reiterated his support for actress Susan Roces, the widow of his late best friend Fernando Poe Jr., describing her as the "new symbol and inspiration" of the masses.

Rule of law

Poe ran for president last year but lost to Ms Arroyo.

Estrada noted the "irony that Ms Arroyo and her allies are calling for the observance of the rule of law when they were the ones who broke it when they ousted me from power in 2001."

Estrada said it was Ms Arroyo and her supporters who turned their backs on the Constitution when they "demonized me, demanded my ouster and convicted me in the streets."

"Ms Arroyo is now reaping what she has sown," Estrada said.

He noted that during his presidency, he allowed protests in the streets and he submitted himself to impeachment proceedings in deference to the Constitution.

"*Walang dinidisperse, walang pinagbabawalang magsalita nuong nakaupo ako* (Nobody was dispersed or prevented from speaking out when I was in power)," he said.

GOVERNORS in GMA: Most of them wearing red, white and blue, at rebuttals this arms to signify their unwavering solidarity with the President.

Pro-GMA solons want Garci to name all callers

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Philip C. Tubeza

IN AN APPARENT move to ease pressure on President Macapagal-Arroyo in the midst of allegations she rigged last year's election, administration lawmakers yesterday demanded that Virgilio Garcillano name all the candidates he spoke with during the balloting.

In exclusive interviews with the inquirer in the past two days, former Election Commissioner Garcillano named at least seven politicians he talked with in the course of the vote. He said they did not ask for favors but merely expressed concern over possible fraud.

He also admitted he talked with Ms Arroyo in a telephone conversation that was capped but denied allegations he conspired with her to fix the polling. He said the wiretap was doctored.

Ms Arroyo has confirmed here in the voice in the wiretap but said she simply wanted to protect her votes.

At the resumption of a joint investigation, five House committees agreed to subpoena the 68-year-old Garcillano and directed the national police to serve the subpoenas to bring him before the inquiry.

Garcillano had earlier denied he was the man in the wiretap. He had disappeared from public view until the telephone interview with the inquirer.

In a news conference, administration Representatives Prospero Pichay, Mercedes Libanan, Rodolfo Antonino and Anthony Miranda told reporters that Garcillano should appear before the inquiry and identify all the opposition personalities he talked with in the last election.

Libanan said allies of Ms Arroyo would want the beleaguered ex-poll official to come out and "clear things out," while Antonino said the inquiries "seem to get to the bottom of the truth."

Committee Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte said it was possible "there were other opposition candidates who might have talked to [Garcillano] during the election."

Minority lawmakers said that by announcing he also talked with the opposition during the balloting, Garcillano was attempting to deflect attention from Ms Arroyo and did not call for her to resign.

"If we continue to let him get away ... and he will keep on dropping names and [opposition] Rep. Jacinto Paras, the said Garcillano had opted to talk to the public through the hearings instead of "facing the music" by attending the congressional inquiry, quits.

All about rigging

Akbayan party-list Rep. Ibrahim Ibrahim, one of the politicians Garcillano said he talked with, chided him to "come out into the open and explain. Instead [before the congressional inquiry to clear them] he has made merely implicated

Garcillano said he had been making representations with the Commission on Elections as vice chair of the House committee on suffrage and part of "my ongoing struggle to overhaul the electoral system."

Former Sen. Francisco Tatad appeared before the joint committee following former Abra Governor Vicente Valera's admission that Tatad was the source of the two audio cassettes, which he had submitted to the inquiry and which were played in open session last Tuesday.

Tatad repeated earlier statements outside the hearing he had received the tapes by mail and could not identify their source. He added he had "tried to have a UN [ban to authenticate it.

Director Reynaldo Wycoco of the National Bureau of Investigation also told the inquiry yesterday that the NBI had processed wiretapping equipment. But he said the PLDT-Smart GSM cell phone interceptor was defective and had not been used.

Noli meets Gloria, Cory, veep contenders

Viewpoint A11

the nation (See story on this page.)

Earlier in the day, political allies of De Castro met in the home of Sen. Jinkee Arroyo to discuss his movements in the event President Macapagal-Arroyo is barred from running, a highly placed source told the Inquirer.

Defense present

Surprisingly, the discussion was attended by Commissioner Secretary Mike Defensor, one of the President's closest associates. The source told the Inquirer that Defensor had been designated to report to the President the results of the meeting.

The meeting took place at the Greenhills home in Barangka Village, Makati, shortly upon De Castro's arrival from Hong Kong, where he spent his 56th birthday with his family.

Also present in the meeting was Sen. Manuel Villar. Both Arroyo and Villar are part of the former's closely knit Wednesday Club.

According to the source, two more names had been floated to be De Castro's vice president in case he finally took over the presidency.

Among them were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Sen. Mar Roxas, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Oscar Orbos and Villar himself. Several presidentiables are governors, on the other hand, were pushing for Speaker Jose de Venecia.

VIP's arrival

Dr. Castro's arrival from Hong Kong appeared to herald the increasing importance accorded the second highest official of the land, security escorts from the Presidential Security Group (PSG) made sure he would not be interviewed.

Dr. Castro and his wife, Admor, arrived on board Cathay Pacific CX 907, which landed at 7:30 p.m. at NAIA.

They were met at Gate 7 by at least six PSG men and aspirin's authority security chief, retired Brig. Gen. Angel Antonio.

After emerging from the tube, the group arose no counter flow as no other person than except VIP passengers use a route different from ordinary passengers.

The Dr. Castro entourage passed through the pre-departure area and went up the departure area.

Surrounded by his security aides, Dr. Castro spoke to someone on a mobile phone as they walked toward an elevator to take them to the ramp, where his vehicle was awaiting.

After the meeting at the Arroyo residence, Dr. Castro was "managya at compartidado na" (happy and satisfied), according to the Inquirer source.

Emerging united opposition

The Dominguez meeting was prompted by the latest develop ments on the opposition front, according to the source.

Dr. Castro's allies were worried about a reportedly emerging united opposition with either actress Susan Roces or Lacson at the forefront of the forces out to remove Ms Arroyo.

The same source also said that Roces and Lacson met Wednesday night when Roces allegedly told the senator to put the gun behind them.

The source said the two opposition stalwarts discussed the possibility of "adopting" Dr. Castro because the latter breaks away from Makabangka.

Only in the Philippines

Dr. Castro was TV news anchor with extremely little political experience when President Arroyo chose him to be her running mate in last year's presidential election.

Now, in a twist of fate that can only happen in the Philippines, the political newcomer pulled to put some personality on the ticket in balance Ms Arroyo's done dismissal, could become presidential if his foes bent to hamstring measures to oust.

In a survey published on Wednesday, the Vice President was chosen by 38 percent of 1,200 Filipinos polled by Pulse Asia as the best alternative to Ms Arroyo to lead the country.

"I am pleased that the people have reaffirmed their trust and confidence in [my] competence as a national leader," Dr. Castro said in a statement on Wednesday.

Ms Arroyo's approval rating promises to quit over allegations she stole last year's presidential election and that her family took kickbacks from illegal gambling.

Team player

Described by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye as a "team player," Dr. Castro has said he would serve in cabinet or support moves to remove the President "out of love—but neither would he block them.

Before losing thrust into Philippine politics, he was the author of top-rated news programs, including "TV Patrol" and "Magandang Gabi Bayan," gaining him a platform from which to launch his political career in 2005.

In the Senate elections that year, he Castro pulled the highest number of votes.

Married twice, he has one child from a first marriage that ended in divorce, and two with his current wife, a former television news executive.

Palliative solution

"Dr. Castro could be a palliative solution," said Earl Parreñas of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms.

"He also loses an election present, so you can expect the opposition to continue making trouble."

Parreñas said he doubted whether Dr. Castro had the competence and experience of past leaders, including former President Joseph Estrada, who

was even mayor for 20 years, a senator and vice president before taking the top job.

"Sir Castro's case makes one to question if [steps to overhaul the country's political system," he said. "We should never choose a vice president only as a question." With a report from Reuters

Police rally round GMA amid talks of restive military

Viewpoint A11

administration.

"The situation now calls for everybody to become solid, to become united, to work together so that we can proceed and help the President in her programs for the administration," said Lumibao, who presented to the President a manifesto of support of the police organization in Mindanao.

"We have come here to renew our pledge of loyalty to the face of so many reports that... there [is] movement going on... [in] the PNP and the military" he told reporters.

According to analysts, the actions may be starting to lose vital support within the Armed Forces and the influential Roman Catholic Church as the battles over ongoing allegations.

Now, more than a month into the scandal, cracks have started to appear in institutional backing for Ms Arroyo, who has apologized for pursuing a top election official in the 2004 presidential poll but denied cheating the electorate.

The President accepted the PNP manifesto from Lumibao, who was accompanied by Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, chief of the PNP directorial staff; Director Vidal Querol, chief of the National Capital Regional Police Office; and Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson.

She thanked the police officials and urged them "to carry on" with their work.

Solidarity cracks

"We have come this morning in solidarity with the President and we also pledge loyalty to the Constitution, to the administration and to the rule of law," Lumibao said.

Key leaders and officers of the PNP at its national headquarters signed the manifesto, he said. Among the President's supporters, he said, were active and retired officers of the PNP, as well as the federation of PNP-accredited nongovernment organizations.

Other PNP leaders would be giving their manifestos of support "in the days to come," Lumibao said.

Top military leaders have earlier stayed publicly loyal to Ms Arroyo, who survived a mutiny by several hundred soldiers who seized the Oakwood Premier building in the financial district of Makati in July 2003 to protest alleged corruption in the military.

But last week, cracks started to appear when the brass ordered the supervision chief of an elite Army regiment for pamphleteering against Ms Arroyo.

Adding to the President's woes, a group of generals and low-ranking officers threatened a mass resignation over claims that Ms Arroyo had used military resources in poll cheating.

'Decisive blow'

A withdrawal of support by the military would be "decisive" in toppling her administration, but the military, at the moment, appeared to be still waiting for the situation to "clear up," according to political analysts.

Soldiers, priests and intellectuals have been crucial in toppling Presidents Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada in 2001, while coup attempts against Corazon Aquino and Arroyo have

GMA hits back, says foes unfit to rule

Story on page A-3

ize in the capitals of our poor, because they seek to turn them on victory."

In a speech before police officers and women on a mass oath taking and awarding ceremonies in Malacañang, she said her detractors "have no platform, they have no concrete and viable plan to help the poor."

"They only have time to reverse progress," the President said, noting that this act was "the most cynical manipulation of hatchetwielding and swing Filipinos."

Ms Arroyo made the statement a day after a Pulse Asia survey confirmed at the height of allegations that she rigged the 2004 presidential election, slumped (but 61 percent of Filipinos favored a life without her leadership. The survey was commissioned by the opposition.

'I can govern'

Pulse Asia, which conducted the survey nationwide on June 20-23, noted that Ms Arroyo's disapproval rating was "unprecedentedly high" at 46 percent and her distrust rating "record breaking" at 52 percent.

The President is fighting for her political life amid allegations she rigged the May 2004 vote, a controversy that has triggered street protests, battered financial markets and fueled talk of a military takeover.

Ms Arroyo said she could govern better than those in the opposition.

"People asked, can I govern? Yes I can govern and I am governing," she said.

Ms Arroyo said her appointments of Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Ramon Barnuevo as new election commissioner and of Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn and anti-"jueteng" czar were part of her efforts at improving governance.

Livelihood

Ms Arroyo also talked about the headway her administration had achieved in providing livelihood to the poor with the release of P20 million to loans for two million entrepreneurs.

She said micro-financing for the poor had been "working quietly but effectively in the last four years."

The President announced that the government was able to secure new micro-finance funds amounting to P700 million, courtesy of Land Bank of the Philippines, Industrial Development Corp. and the National Livelihood Support Funds.

She told her audience of women and police officers that they could avail themselves of the funds, acknowledging they might need to augment their incomes.

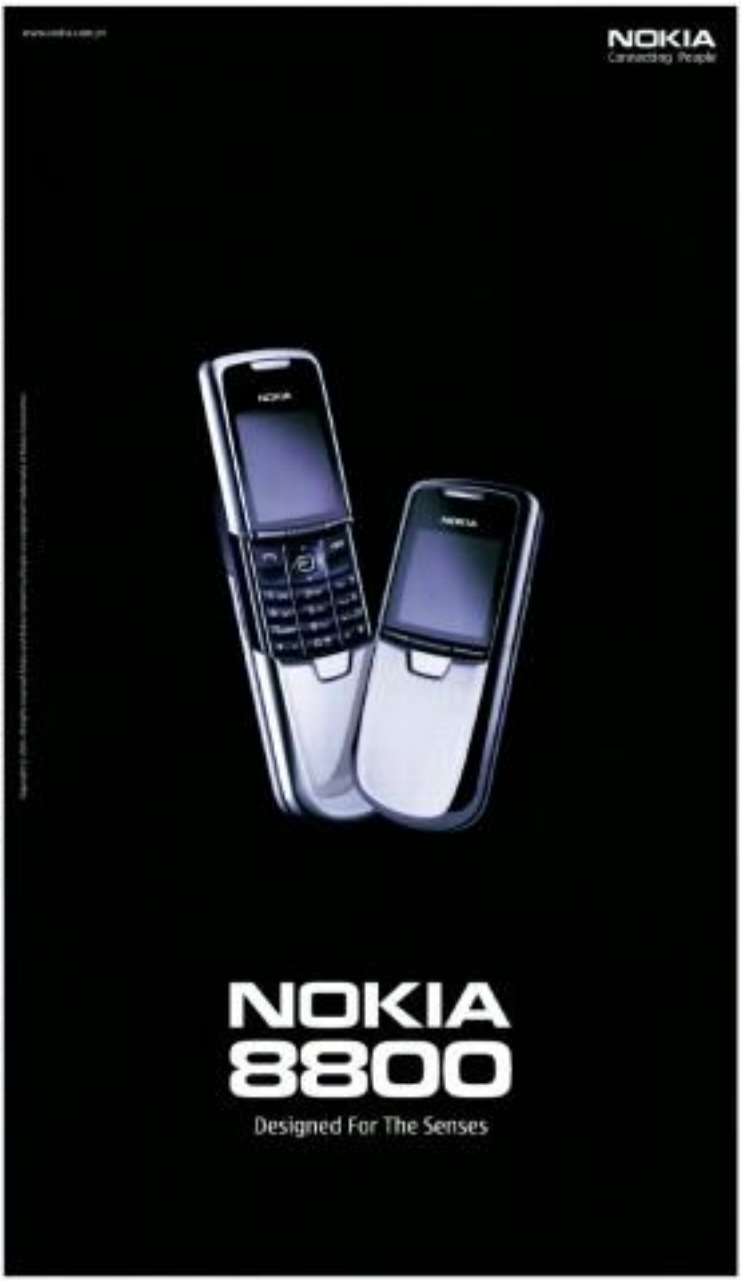
Worsening quality of life

The findings of the Pulse Asia survey on the quality of life of Filipinos is not favorable to the Arroyo administration.

Compared to their quality of life during the Estrada administration, 58 percent of those polled by Pulse Asia acknowledged that there was worsening under the Arroyo administration.

Almost 50 percent said their family's quality of life would remain the same or get worse should the Arroyo administration stay in power until 2010, according to Pulse Asia.

The independent polling firm said Filipinos rate the present administration as inferior to the Estrada administration.



Send resumés instantly

www.jobsdbasiaonline.com

JOB

Get a chance to win these fabulous prizes by applying online for a Personal Loan or Credit Card. Apply now!

Visit www.hsbc.com.ph

HSBC

The world's local bank

GMA tells Cabinet: Quit

STREEPED: a print, President Arroyo addresses an audience of women achievers and policewomen during a new oath-taking and awarding rites at the Rizal Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang. MARIA TAN, INQUIRER

Ignacio and the news "confirmed that the President has lost moral ground," but other secretaries were also pointed to follow suit.

De Leon said that the two Cabinet officials had met with the ASEAN yesterday morning.

De Leon declined to name the two Cabinet men but Tiu Laurel, who learned from an independent source that they were Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima and Trade Secretary Jose Sonza.

'The platters'

A Malacañang source close to the President did not only identify Purisima but also named Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Deles as among those quitting. The source described them as "platters" in the Cabinet who were attempting to install Vice President Noli de Castro as president.

The source said Purisima allegedly met with Dr. Garcia in Hong Kong two days ago and had lunch with ex-agriculture sec. Eddie Villamor at the Tower Club yesterday.

Then he [Purisima] texted the Cabinet members who are planning to resign to join him at the Hyatt Hotel and sleep there tonight so that can have a press conference tomorrow [Friday]," the source told the Inquirer.

The source said the President has called a meeting of the Cabinet at 11 a.m. to accept the courtesy resignations, then resign herself "so nobody can say we're not."

"So what resignation are they going to announce tomorrow when they have all been outgoing resigned," the source said.

Federalism

In asking for the resignation of her Cabinet, Ms Arroyo said she would ask matters to give her matter of candidates to replace those who shouldn't be resignation ed. She said the new Cabinet would be given a free hand to get government management while she focused on fundamental changes in the Constitution and confined to Malacañang Palace.

"This is neither a plea nor pity mark," Ms Arroyo said. "Our country is hungry for a resolution to the political uncertainties that have plagued us these past few months.

According to the President's address, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said, "these are signs that the end is near."

Bravura

"At most, she's putting up a bravura, hoping she can manage to hang on despite the obvious lack of support. By asking the Cabinet to tender their resignation, she is actually jumping the gun on them," Pimentel said.

In her address, Ms Arroyo said that she apologized in the earlier time she made any "lapse in judgment" in talking over a bugged telephone with Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano during last year's balloting.

"Mistakes in grave judgment peddled the lie that I manipulated the hearing," she said. She lamented the nation's political system had degenerated that it was difficult to live within it with "hands totally untainted."

Our country is hungry

Ms Arroyo also said she was forced to come out with these reforms now rather than wait for her State of the Nation Address on July 26 mainly because "our country is hungry" for a resolution to the political uncertainties that have plagued us these past few weeks.

She said that for her to resign "under circumstances that compromise the stability of institutions in this country would be the ultimate betrayal of my oath of office IC then as Edsa 3, and so on, unless our political system was first reformed to make it more responsive to the people's will, such that changes in leadership came about in an orderly and stable manner."

The President said she would collaborate with lawmakers and civil groups to amend the Constitution "to confront such basic issues as federalism, the character of the legislative process, redistricting, term limits for elective officials and, most need in some campaign funds, modernizing the economic provisions of our Constitution."

Political truce

She said that "the biggest, most painful political truth was that over the years, our political system has degenerated to such an extent that it is very difficult to live within the system with hands totally untainted."

Ms Arroyo also let back at her critics in Congress and the books. "We have endless investigations and symbols in aid of politics and media projection rather than in aid of legislation or reform," she said.

"It is very painful for me to know that among many of our countrymen today, I have been demonized as the 'bad guy' This is unfair."

The President, however, took a **revolutionary** stance later in her message. "I do not blame any individual or political block for this and state of affairs. We are collectively to be blame since we must collectively be the solution," the President said.

Catholic schools' position: Resignation is GMA's decision

By Alcuin Papa and Christian V Esguerra

AFTER a four-hour "emotional" meeting yesterday, administration allies in the House of Representatives left no doubt that Malacañang will let President Macapagal-Arroyo the decision to resign in the face of nationwide calls for her administration's ouster.

Administrators of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) also said the impeachment process against Ms Arroyo should be allowed "to go to trial."

The CBCP position is similar to the stand taken by the dean of the Ateneo Law School but is different from that of the administrators of De La Salle University (DLSU) who have asked Ms Arroyo to step down.

Also, a growing number of groups want the President to resign for allegedly rigging the 2004 elections, supporters of Ms Arroyo are starting out in the open.

The country's largest organization of evangelical churches, the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC)—a group the President is "closest."

Protested governors also want the President to step in office for they do not mind hearing Vice President Noli de Castro as her successor if she resigns or is impeached.

In a meeting at the Dr. Jobedan Bible College in Ermita, Manila, Fr. Roderick Salazar SVD, CBBP national president, told reporters Ms Arroyo "should decide if the situation calls for her to step down or what some senators are asking her to do."

"Madam President, this issue (resignation) we leave to you. (It is something) your conscience should address. Based on what you think is good for the nation," Salazar said.

If Arroyo decided to step, Salazar said CBAP would want to see "real reform in government" for the benefit of the country.

Monsignor Gerardo Santos, CBMP National Capital Region head, said they rejected the use of violence to resolve the controversies, saying it is "unacceptable."

Salazar noted that around 200 school administrators were present at the meeting, which he described as "very difficult." He said CBAP's stand was a product of a "consensus."

The group will come out with their statement in the coming days. This will also be disseminated to their other members around the country. The CBAP counts some 1,200 Catholic schools as members.

CBAP board member Ilan Incrocente of the San Beda College said the four-hour meeting had at times turned "emotional" with representatives from the ICE-LIG narrating their position that the President should resign.

Enrico said CBAP's stand was in line with earlier pastoral letter released by Manila Archbishop Cardinals Rosales.

Enrico said that members could come up with their individual stand on the matter and that their students and faculty would not be barred from joining protest actions.

For its part, PCEC wants the President to "allow the constitutional process to arrive at a speedy and just resolution of the issues confronting the president."

"We're giving her a chance," PCEC chair Bishop Efraim Tendero told the Inquirer in a phone interview, shortly after his group drafted its position at its 26th annual assembly in Bacolod yesterday afternoon.

The PCEC has around two million members represented by 65 denominations, 322 district organizations and more than 20,000 local evangelical churches nationwide, he said.

At a press conference in Muntinlupa, Bishop Teodoro Bacani Jr., chair of the Legazpi Province of the Philippine Independent Church, said the members of the Supreme Court should resign if they refused to step down.

Fr. Catalino Arevalo, SVD, spokesman of the Archdiocese of Manila, said the archbishop "is not in favor of the resignation."

Fr. Arevalo, coordinator of Caritas Manila, Lolas Pinoy, said they were not sure if all of the groups that attended the conference yesterday.

Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia, who was to speak in the forum, said he received an invitation from Socorro Secretary Danilo Constantino, chief operations officer at the Office of External Affairs of the Office of the President.

More than 200 persons joined the forum. Among them were members of labor, poor organizations, vendors, farmers and GSIS workers. With reports from Aaron B. Recuenco, PDI Visayas Bureau

MORE: Of the same by now familiar refrain from militant groups massing at the Luneta ng Bonifacio. JOAN BONDOC

PRO-DEMOCRACY rally, for a change, at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City, in no doubt in support of President Arroyo JOAN BONDOC

Cha-cha 'exit option' for GMA in 10 months, says Ramos

power was only brought about by a lack of an alternative.

Better than Noli

He said the country was better off being led by Ms Arroyo rather than Vice President Noli de Castro.

The former President suggested that Congress immediately convene a constitutional assembly that would craft the new Constitution to put parliamentary elections and be held.

He suggested doing all these in 18 months.

High commission

Together with the forming of a constituent assembly, Ramos said Congress should also establish a high commission.

The commission would be an independent body composed of well-attired leaders who would examine the country's political and economic situation and come up with prescription such as policy solutions.

Ramos said he was leaving it up to Congress to come up with the procedures of forming the high commission, but he underscored the need for the independent body to be given the full power to come up with solutions.

He said the commission would have already come up with prescribed remedies for the country's political and economic ills by December.

For his part, the constituent assembly should come up with the draft of the new Constitution by Jan. 1 so that it could be put to a plebiscite by Feb. 14.

Elections in May

The new Constitution would take effect in March and the election of new leaders would be held on May 10, seven days in March.

On comments that his proposals failed to address allegations of electoral fraud hurled against Ms Arroyo, Ramos suggested that the public forget about it for the moment.

He called on the public to work for solutions, saying getting the country back into shape requires that it focus on getting the supposed winner done.

While Ms Arroyo is still in office, opponents of Ms Arroyo are campaigning for "post-Gloria" scenarios.

These are a revolutionary government, snap elections, a caretaker junta, and a De Castro presidency.

At a forum on the campus of the University of the Philippines in Quezon City, groups from the academe and civil society discussed the topic, "After Gloria, What's Next?"

A group led by former UP professor Francisco Nemenzo Jr. believes a revolutionary transitional government is what the country needs for genuine and fundamental social reforms.

Carol Araullo, head of the Bayan Muna Alyansang Makabayan, thinks a parliamentary government could be the best option.

Evangelina Jiao, Eddie Villamor, ex-retail biz dream should "not one" the presidency but if this did not happen, a "qualified People Power" may take place.

No to snap polls

A snap election is not palatable to the group unified UP Alliance Working for democracy (Saneco), as it will only constitute a changing of the guard.

So is a military junta, though Honasan and military support around the movement for their group's purposes.

"With the way things are going, however, a De Castro presidency might just happen, said Araullo.

The group will not be able to do something about it, if this happens, she said. The only alternative is for a massive uprising in the streets, she said.

"I'm not saying tens of thousands, not even hundreds of thousands. I'm talking about millions of people, who will vote not in a snap election but with their feet," Araullo said.

'Stolen presidency'

The group had differing versions of a "post-Gloria" eventuality, but Nemenzo noted that the first step in all these was Ms Arroyo's ouster.

Villanueva said Ms Arroyo's presidency was a "stolen presidency and the byproduct of a stolen election."

There is a "moral justification" for her ouster, he said. With reports from Cynthia D. Balana

Wrong Arroyo exiled—Nene

husband left for the United States.

Not Gwakman-ish Nation

His twenty-San Francisco-bound flying. The President's elder son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, and his family flew to the Pentagon later that evening.

Speculation is surging "packing" paraffle, the Arroyo's husband and son have become lightning rods for opposition attacks on the President. Their departure is expected to ease the pressure on Ms Arroyo who is fending off charges she rigged the 2004 presidential election.

"I urge President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo not to run deaf and blind to the reality that she has lost the trust and support of the people instead of entertaining the illusion that she can hold on to power and survive the political crisis," Pimentel said.

Face truth

"The President is harboring false hopes that she can regain public sympathy and 'clean the mounting calls for her resignation by sending First Gentleman Mike Arroyo to a temporary exile to the United States," he added.

Pimentel said Ms Arroyo was refusing to face the truth by running deaths on unfavorable survey findings, referring to a Pulse Asia survey that the survey results "reflect the public perception and not necessarily the truth."

"Ms Arroyo should swallow the bitter pill and accept that the most decent thing to do now a for her to resign in the light of the latest Pulse Asia survey showing that 61 percent of Filipinos believe that they would be better off without her," Pimentel said.

The senator warned that the President's refusal to step down would only increase the likelihood that extreme groups may overthrow her through a military coup or people power revolt.

Mikey Arroyo

Mikey Arroyo refused to talk with newsmen who covered his family's departure for the United States on Wednesday night, saying their responses in interviewing him was "traumatizing" his eldest daughter.

The congressman, his wife Angelica, and daughters Mikaela Elena and Isa Angelique, who is still on infant, left for San Francisco on board Philippine Airlines Flight No. PR 104 that took off at 10:30 p.m. San Francisco is a favorite vacation area of the First Family.

Mikey, who is known for his short temper, gave an exasperated smile at GMA Corporate Susan Enriquez who kept asking him questions.

"Manawa ka na sana ko. Dinay pay ang isa ka child. Don't traumatize my daughter," he told Enriquez.

Before entering the gate, Mikey bade the media goodbye and apologized for his behavior.

2 officers quit medal board over 'undeserved' award

By Dona Pazzibugan

TWO senior military officials have quit from the 15-man Medal of Valor Board in protest of the conferment of the highest military combat award to Army Lt. Col. Noel Buan.

Army Col. Antonio Gillo and Marine Lt. Col. Gamaliel Barron resigned from the board last May 3 reportedly to protest Armed Forces chief Gen. Efren Abu's veto of the board's recommendation to award the medal of valor to Buan and one of his men, Sgt. Leopoldo Bobiles.

Gillo also resigned as chief of the AFP Joint Operations Center last June 30. He is waiting for reassignment.

Barron is reportedly on military wheeling to Hawaii.

Both Medal of Valor awardees, Cirio and Pascua had questioned giving the prestigious award to Buan and Bobiles.

"The board and the higher authorities ordered the awarding of the Medal of Valor to Colonel Buan and Sgt. Leopoldo Bobiles despite very disturbing medical and ethical concerns," said a military officer privy to the board's deliberations.

The decision to give the award to Buan and Bobiles was "a determination to this highly revered and highest award," the officer added.

Buan and Bobiles were awarded the venerable Medal of Valor for commanding a handful of soldiers in a daring rescue of Philippine Marines held hostage by Muslim rebels in Basilan on April 8, 2002.

They received their Medal of Valor awards from President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang last Dec. 28.

In February, Abu ordered a review when the awards were questioned.

After deliberation, the 15-man board reportedly decided to recall the medals and to award instead the Bronze Cross, the second highest combat award, to Buan and Bobiles.

Another military officer who spoke on condition of anonymity to add the board found that Buan and Bobiles's acts did not meet the criteria of "intrepidity and conspicuous act of gallantry above and beyond the call of duty."

The officer added the non-endorsement of both and five others were "had the element of denial" since the fourth ranker was reportedly chosen to succeed Abu as AFP chief of staff on July.

It was also learned that Buan's men remembered Valor Day.

Other Medal of Valor awardees had their cases gravely reconsidered by the review.

But Abu vetoed the recommendation of the board to downgrade the award because the "rights official the President," an officer said.

Macapagal announced that Buan would receive the Medal of Valor separately from other awardees because the board could not hold their deliberations.

Cirio, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class 1979, was awarded the Medal of Valor on Dec. 6, 1990.

Then a young captain, Cirio led his unit to rout the rebels figured there Company and subdued in a two-hour battle with communist rebels in Manila, Negros Occidental on April 6, 1990.

In the raid they killed six rebels, overran a 30-hut rebel camp and recovered a cache of firearms.

Barron, a member of PMA Class 1987, received the medal on Dec. 20, 1994.

From May 7 to 15 that year, Barron led his men in combing down and storming the Abu Sayyaf's Camp at Mauboh in Basilan.

They successfully recovered kidnap victim Luis Antonio Bituin Jr., killed 18 bandits and recovered rebel arsenal.

Buan, a member of PMA class 1984, was captured by the Abu Sayyaf in 1999 when he was the intelligence officer in Southern Tagalog. He was released a year later by the MNLF-Misuari faction following a series of negotiations.

BUAN with controversial medal

'Juetengate' misses TV prime time

By TJ Burgonio

IF "GMA" ruined the Senate's inquiry into the "Juetengate" scandal on TV yesterday, don't fret.

The Senate canceled its public hearing into the illegal numbers game and vowed to fix "this day due to the unavailability of some witnesses, Sen. Manuel Villar said.

Villar said the committee on public order and illegal drugs which he chairs would have to work around the schedules of the witnesses to ensure their attendance in the drafting and new hearing.

The senator said then, the assistant, Chief Supt. Reginaldo Monzanilla (ret.), former Region V police director who appeared as a witness on the last two hearings, will fix this week.

"We (have) to ensure that everybody would attend," Villar said in a phone interview.

Monzanilla denied any involvement in jueteng as clue he had asked an unlimited bagmanship to deliver payoffs from gambling lords to President Macapagal-Arroyo's son, Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, and brother-in-law, Rep. Ignacio Arroyo, in Pampanga.

Villar's committee released a list of 28 invitees' persons for the new hearing, including Monzanilla, the alleged bagmanship lawyer Cesti and Bishop Oscar Cruz, whose anti-gambling crusade started the investigation.

Also invited were Police Director Rodolfo Tor of the PNP Directorate for Plans; Maly Santos and Police Insp. Leonilo Custodio, both of the PNP Crime Laboratory, and attorney Jeremy Agustin, Philbrooks Bilyan and Domnadhaven Abenlen Bina, among others.

But Rodolfo "Boying" Pineda, suspected Pampanga gambling lord, said Gov. Armand Sanchez of Batangas never was on the list.

"I'd like to say that I am worried about the fact there seems to be a reluctance on the part of the new committee to summon the jueteng lords, particularly (the) alleged financiers of Batangas," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. told reporters Wednesday.

"And (the reason apparently, I hope I am wrong, is that) Governor Sanchez enjoys the support of some big politicians because I think he is neither the financier (n) nor the brains behind the system of a public disparity."

Villar, however, said suspected gambling lords would eventually be summoned after the Senate wraps up its hearings on Cesti's allegations on the involvement of the Arroyos in jueteng.

"We just can't jump from one issue to another. Otherwise, we won't finish anything," he said.

RETURN OF THE JUDAY

Actress turns tables on BIR

By Armand N. Nocum

NOW it's Judy's turn.

Actress Judy Ann Santos yesterday filed with the Department of Justice a complaint-affidavit and counter-charge against the Bureau of Internal Revenue for allegedly falsifying and committing perjury when it swore on the veracity of documents showing that she allegedly had some P17 million in tax liabilities in 2002.

In BIR...Santos said, the revenue officer owed her P1,895,438 in overpaid taxes.

In a complaint she submitted to the DOJ, Santos (Judy Ann Lumagui Santos in real life) said she was libeled against by an May 31 news "deliberately falsified and grossly prepared" because the tax assessments were leaked late for the records filed to include the withholding taxes the entertainment companies had deducted from her salary here.

"Clearly, the taxes withheld at source were deliberately and maliciously omitted by the complainant and his witnesses in their perjured joint affidavit. Had complainant and his examiners been more diligent, prudent and circumspect, they could have considered the actual facts and circumstances of this tax situation," the actress said in the complaint against Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. and six of his men.

The BIR said in its complaint that Santos owned a total of P5.676 million for taxable year 2002—P3.1 million from ABS-CBN, P2.9 million from Viva Productions Inc., and P615,000 from Star Cinema Productions.

The BIR said her tax liabilities amounted to P1.7 million.

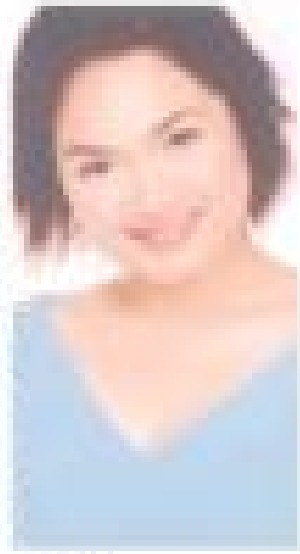
But Santos, through lawyer Rodolfo A. Alcantara, produced documents showing that the three entertainment firms withheld some P2.6 million in taxes from the actress' salary here.

Thus, minus the estimated P1.7 million tax liabilities, Santos said she was entitled to have an "overpayment" of a little over a million to withholding taxes.

She said she had "duly paid her taxes for 2002, and even overpaid by (P1 million), which has not been refunded by the (BIR) until today."

On these grounds, Santos said the BIR's complaint was a "false and perjured accusation" based on a "false and fabricated" joint affidavit of an internal revenue examiner who looked into her tax records.

She asked the court to dismiss the BIR case against her for lack of legal basis.



SANTOS

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

G8 to yield to Bush on climate change

GLENEAGLES, Scotland—Group of Eight leaders meeting here Thursday were poised to yield to US demands to produce a bland statement on global warming, eluding the wrath of scientists and environmentalists worldwide.

US President George Bush, speaking just ahead of formal G8 summit talks at a heavily guarded golf resort in the pristine Scottish countryside, reiterated his opposition to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol climate pact as too costly and unfair for the American economy.

The final topics in an ECLG.

"Now it is time to get beyond the Kyoto period and develop a strategy that is inclusive not only of the United States but also with developing nations," Bush said after a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Global warming is the most contentious topic at a Group of Eight summit gathering the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

The US and British leaders, done alike in the trip, were upbeat ahead of a working breakfast to try to close their positions before the opening of formal G8 talks.

Bush said there was a "consensus to move forward together." But he reiterated his long-standing determination that a global warming treaty include developing countries such as China and India, which are currently excluded from Kyoto provisions requiring specific pollution cuts.

"The way to move forward together is to recognize, one, there is a problem, which I have done—I have been the president. Two, that there's a constructive way to deal with the problem," the US leader said.

"The most constructive way to deal with the problem from our perspective is one, to not only include the United States in discussions, but also include developing countries in discussions, countries like India and China," he said.

Asked whether he had changed his stance, Bush said: "My position has been pretty steady." Bush opposes Kyoto's call for a cap on carbon pollution, declaring that this would be ruinously expensive for the US economy, which is chronically dependent on oil, gas and coal.

Blair, who has placed progress on combating climate change and boosting development aid Africa at the heart of the three-day summit, appeared to acknowledge that a bond-hitting statement here was unlikely. Africa will be the main topic on Friday.

"There is no point going over the Kyoto debate," he said.

"We're not going to negotiate some new treaty on climate change here at the G8 meeting. All it is about is setting whether it would be possible in the future to bring people back into consensus on the future."

"Not just America and Europe and Japan, but America, Europe Japan and emerging economies which are the future will be the major consumers of energy."

"Can we achieve that? I don't know. It is important we hear, begin a process of dialogue." The summit was nonetheless expected to name a declaration and a "Gleneagles Plan of Action" on global warming.

But the nine climate change documents were on course to be pared of any controversy or of any significant pressure on the United States, angry environmentalists complained.

BRITAIN'S Queen Elizabeth II poses for the family photo with G8 leaders, (left to right) US President Bush, Britain's Prince Philip, French President Chirac, Queen Elizabeth II, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Russian President Vladimir Putin, back row (left to right), European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso, Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin. AFP

References to the Kyoto Protocol, the first pact on cutting carbon gases that trap solar heat and echo Earth's surface temperature, as well as scientific warnings about the urgency of the problem, were pared. Stronger one-hard, they said.

Instead of targets and promises of money, the summit would back a market-based approach on tackling climate change, while playing verbal support for lower energy efficiency, carbon "sinks" (forests) and other recent technologies to help reduce pollution levels, summit sources said. AFP

Menu for Queen's G8 summit dinner

GLENEAGLES, Scotland—Menu from Wednesday night's banquet for G8 leaders hosted by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II:

◆ Menu

Strathtay Smoked Salmon with Roasted Langoustines and Herb Salad

Roast Fillet of Gleneagles Lamb Dressed Brains and Peas

Indian-style Curried Parmesan Polenta

Terrarium of Chocolate

▸ Wines:

Louis Roederer Quartet NV, Anderson Valley, California

Bordeaux Entre-deux-Mers Jing Sparkling (12 Percent) 1999

Muscats (1994 Chteau Ste-Ghost)

Chateau Climens, Barsac 1990

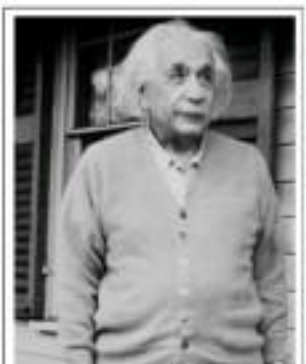
◆ After Dinner

Royal Mintage Port 1968

Lord Aminoff Black Bruiser Vodka

Crown Royal Canadian Whisky Makers reserve Salute

Royal Lochnagar 12 Year Old Single Malt AFP



AGAINST A-BOMB

An autographed photo given by Albert Einstein to Japanese philosopher Sosai Shimomura during their correspondence in 1952 and 1954 which deplored the genius' lack of power to prevent the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago. AFP

Experts see return of al-Qaida to Afghanistan

PARIS—Members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network may have returned to Afghanistan en masse to bolster Taliban militants fighting US and Afghan forces in the rugged south of the country, officials and analysts say.

Although no one has come forward with any hard proof, evidence seems to indicate that hundreds of Qaida fighters have gone back to the country that was their home base for years until US-led forces toppled the Taliban in late 2001.

The governor of the southern Afghan province of Kandahar, Gul Agha Sherzai, said after a deadly suicide attack in a mosque last month that police "found documents on the [bombers'] body that showed he was an Arab." He told reporters that this proved that "Arab al-Qaida terrorist had entered Afghanistan and had planned terrorist attacks." Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak also has said that the New York Times. "There is a regrouping of al-Qaida, and it seems they are going to pay more attention to Afghanistan. We are coming into foreign fighters here and there," said Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, earlier a visit to India this week that the Taliban had become "significantly stronger" and that the likely explanation was that they were getting "outside support." The head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, France's Jean Arnault, warned the UN Security Council in late June that the security situation in the country was worsening.

Arnault told the council that the Taliban which seem to have "more funding, more deadly weaponry, more sophisticated media for propaganda and more aggressive, cruel and indiscriminate tactics." Since the start of the year, attacks orchestrated by Taliban militants have resulted in nearly 600 deaths, as opposed to 400 deaths in similar attacks for all of 2004, according to an AFP tally.

Michael Scheuer, who headed up the CIA's special "Bin Laden unit" from 1996 to 1999, says nothing shocking in the recent reports of an increased al-Qaida presence in Afghanistan. AFP

Humans arrive, beasts go extinct, study finds

WASHINGTON—The extinction of most of Australia's huge animals occurred around 45,000 years ago, shortly after the arrival of humans. A study suggests that human burning of the landscape forced drastic changes that killed off many of the animals.

Researchers studying ancient eggshells from two types of large birds, as well as the teeth of wombats, found a change in the types of carbon the animals ingested, reflecting a change in diet.

Before the extinction, grasses, trees and shrubs were commonly eaten—but then grasses dominated from the animals' diet, the researchers reported in Friday's issue of the journal Science.

"Humans are the major suspect," Marilyn Fogel of the Carnegie Institution said in a statement.

Stephen Pyne of the University of Colorado commented that "the opportunistic feeders inherited and the picky eaters went extinct." AP

HINDU-MUSLIM TENSION

Indian police secure the burnt ground outside a temple in Ayodhya, about 500 km southeast of New Delhi July 6. Indian police fired tear gas on Wednesday to disperse Hindu activists who blockaded roads and forced shops to shut over 48 hours to protest an attack on a holy site that has been a stumbling for Hindu-Muslim violence. REUTERS

US births by foreign mothers increase

NEW YORK—Nearly 23 percent of all people born in the United States in 2002 had a foreign-born mother—the largest percentage since a wave of immigration more than 80 years ago, a study of birth records by a private nonprofit group shows.

The Center for Immigration Studies, which favors restrictions on immigration, said the country has not seen so large a share of its children born to immigrants since 1918, when the number reached 20 percent as shiploads of Italians and eastern Europeans crowded America's ports of entry.

This time, Hispanics are the driving force, according to the study being released Thursday. Nearly 1 in 10 births in the United States in 2002 was to a woman born in Mexico. Hispanics, as a whole, accounted for 59 percent of all births by immigrants.

The boom in second-generation Americans is bound to have an effect on the country that is equal, if not greater, than the one changes of the early 20th century, said Steven Camarota, the Center for Immigration Studies researcher who wrote the report.

He said the influx of immigrants in the early 1900s was eventually assimilated by a tightening of entry rules and two world wars, and that no such cutoff appears imminent now.

"It just tells you that we are headed into uncharted territory," Camarota said.

The Center for Immigration Studies compiled the data from birth records collected by The National Center for Health Statistics. The records include both legal and illegal immigrants, but do not indicate which is child's father was born.

Children of immigrant mothers accounted for about 973,000 of the 4 million births in the United States in 2002. By comparison, 220,486 of the 2.7 million births in the US in 1970 were to foreign-born mothers, or about 8 percent.

Camarota said the growing size of immigrant communities could slow their assimilation into American culture and make it more difficult "to have a cohesive sense of national vision."

Pro-immigration groups reject of that argument.

"For 400 years, immigrants have come to our shores, worked hard, had families and built the most powerful nation in history," said Frank Sharry, executive director of the National Immigration Forum.

"The notion that we are going to be the one group that does not become Americans is ridiculous," said Lisa Navarrete, a spokesperson for the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group. AP

Rice to 'snub' Asean talks

PANGKOR—US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will not attend a key Southeast Asian meeting this month, officials said Wednesday amid warnings that the move could be viewed as a slight by the region's leaders.

Rice had told Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) foreign ministers that she could not make it to the Asean Ministerial Meeting in the Laotian capital Vientiane in late July due to a clash of schedules, regional diplomats said.

But some officials had linked her skipping of the trip to concerns in Washington that the region was not pushing enough for democracy reforms in military-ruled Burma.

An aide would be the first time in almost two decades that a US secretary of State is not participating in the annual Asean talks, senior Asian leaders view pervasive it as downgrading of US participation in the region's most important diplomatic event.

The meeting includes a July 28-29 post-ministerial dialogue between Asean and its key trading partners, notably the United States, European Union, China, Japan and Russia, as well as an Asean Regional Forum (ARF), the only official security meeting in the Asia-Pacific region.

Rice, who is expected to visit Africa during that period, would be represented by her deputy Robert Zoellick, the former US Trade Representative and an old hand hand, in the meetings.

Zoellick has predecessor Colin Powell, who maintained a personal touch in relations with his Asean counterparts. Rice has delegated much of the work in the region to Zoellick.

But top priority in Asia for the Bush administration remains the Korean nuclear crisis. AFP

COPIERS
Canon • Olivetti • Savin
Also Available : LIQUID COPIERS
COPYTRADE.

Location Location Location
NEW Rada-Regency
P12,788
612-2222-243-8888-818-8888-241-1094

Liquidated Merchandise from U.S.A.!
60 Units Audio Components/ Systems
20 Units Portable Radio
21 Units Television Sets
17 Units Fax / Printer
54 Units Microwave Ovens
Pls. Call 751-0296 • 411-2024

THE ARTICHOKE LAMP
The consummate modernist chandelier, designed by Poul Henningsen of Denmark. Composed of overlapping layers of aluminum "leaves".
Large size (approx - 30" high) P58,080.00
Small size (approx - 20" high) P51,080.00
Piniture

Contemporary Country Style Collections by Union Square
Wait as, NOW!
UNION SQUARE FURNISHINGS
"Giving the best of Filipino craftsmanship"

Now more flavorful...
The 3rd Coffee, Tea & Specialty Beverage Trade Show
July 7-9, 2005
10:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M.
The Philippine Barista Cup 2005

INVITATION

A solution for easy low batt battery
POWER CEL

CHINA
SUPER VALUE PACKAGES

KARAT
A KOHLER COMPANY
Simplicity... that inspires
Available at all Wilcon Builders Branches and all leading hardware stores nationwide.

WAIT UNTIL DARK
Panasonic
STAND-BY LIGHT
Automatic Power - Failure Light

Terror hits London; 40 killed in blasts

From page A1

Tighe Commission warned London residents to stay at home to avoid any evidence around the bomb.

The bombs came a day after a jubilant London was awarded the 2012 Olympic Games.

"I'm deeply saddened that this should happen at the heart of an Olympic city. Unfortunately there is no safe haven. No one can say their city is safe," said International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge in Singapore.

Italy's interior ministry said all the Italian tourist alive.

Britain has been key ally of the United States in its war in Iraq, where al-Qaida is waging a bloody insurgency.

Police said two people were killed in Aldgate East underground station in the financial center of the city, with a further 46 people wounded. Around 100 wounded people were taken to Royal London Hospital, 10 of them in critical condition.

London's police chief Ian Blair said there were indications of explosives in the blast sites.

"We are concerned that this is a coordinated attack," he told Sky television.

London Mayor Ken Livingstone, speaking in Singapore, said suicide bombers may have been involved.

"I wish to speak to you directly—to those who came to London today to take block," he said. "I know that you personally do not stop to give your own life in exchange for taking others, which for who you are so dangerous."

People were seen attending one of the underground stations covered with blood and soot. Passengers were evacuated from stations across the capital, many in shock and with their clothes ripped to shreds, witnesses said.

The city's streets rapidly emptied and financial markets plummeted as it became increasingly apparent that the blasts were an attack and not a power surge on the underground train system as had first been reported.

Security experts said the blasts bore all the hallmarks of al-Qaida.

"If what we are looking at is a multisimultaneous bombing, and it does look like that, it would very certainly fit the classic al-Qaida methodology which uses cars precisely as these multi-armed bandits against and infrastructural targets," said Shane Brighton, intelligence expert at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense.

On the currency markets, the safe-haven Swiss franc hit a six-week high against sterling and rose more than one percent against the dollar following the explosions.

"The market is showing a textbook reaction, buying safe-haven currencies like the Swiss franc and euro and selling down the dollar," said Marco Annunziata, currency strategist at Standard Chartered.

Oil prices initially fell close previous before recovering and London's FTSE stock exchange rose two percent.

US authorities were monitoring the situation. An official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there has been no credible, specific threat of an attack in the United States, but that analysts were sifting through recent intelligence for any evidence of further or broader terror attempt, the official said.

After the London explosions, US cities began considering how to react.

In the nation's capital, heavily staffing stop and search police officers were dispatched to patrol subways and bus routes. Reuters and AP report

ANTI-TERROR: A police officer helps a passenger evacuated away from Edgware Road Tube Station in London following an explosion on July 7. Four simultaneous explosions rocked the London subway and three double-decker buses on the morning rush hour, prompting officials to shut down the entire underground transport network. AP

Allergy ALERT!

PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND IMMUNOLOGY

AND

UNILAB

CELEBRATE

World Allergy Day 8 July 2005

Aksyon Iwas-Allergy!

The first long-term public service program of the Philippine Society of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, UNILAB Foundation Health, and national government units for the prevention and treatment of allergies

- Information dissemination on the prevention and avoidance of allergies
- Clean-house campaign
- Free anti-allergy medicines to local health government units for the treatment of allergy

The World Allergy Day promotes opportunities to educate people about allergies and their prevention. Allergies are costly to society but more importantly, have a major impact on the quality of life of sufferers, and in extreme cases, severe allergic reactions may be fatal. Get to know the problem to find a solution. Take part in the World Allergy Day activities.

WORLD ALLERGY DAY ACTIVITIES

- FREE SKIN TESTING • FREE CLINICS • LAB FORA IN OPDs

at these medical institutions

PHILIPPINE GENERAL HOSPITAL
ST. LUKE'S MEDICAL CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST RAMON MAGSAYSAY MEMORIAL CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS
FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST

Supported by the new buzz words in allergy relief

DIPHENHYDRAMINE HCl
ALLERIN AH

LORATADINE
ALLERTA

NYT reporter jailed for refusal to reveal source

WASHINGTON—New York Times reporter Judith Miller was jailed for refusing to divulge a confidential source in a grand jury investigation of the Bush administration's leak of an undercover CIA operative's name. Another reporter, Matthew Cooper of Time magazine, agreed to talk and avoided jail.

MILLER

Cooper agreed to cooperate with prosecutor's Fitzgerald after obtaining clear his source had given him permission to do so. Miller—who has never disclosed a confidential source in nearly two decades of reporting—refused to testify before the grand jury investigating the leak.

The developments added further intrigue to what already was one of the most closely watched press freedom cases in recent history. The case evolved from questions about whether President George W. Bush's government misrepresented prewar intelligence on Iraq's weapons capabilities.

"I do not view myself as above the law," Miller told US District Judge Thomas Hogan. "You are right to send me to prison."

But she said she had an obligation to protect a confidential source: "I do not make confidentiality pledges lightly, but when I do I mean to honor them."

Hogan was adamant that Miller comply with the court's order to testify.

"If she was given a pass on this, the laws person who comes up" might refuse to cooperate as well, Hogan said. "There is still a realistic possibility that confinement might cause her to testify." AP

Review reaffirms use of pain drug Celebrex—Pfizer

NEW YORK—Pfizer Inc. said today that the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) review of COX-2 medicines has concluded, with the expert committee reaffirming use of Pfizer's Celebrex 200 mg pain medicine. Celebrex is effective and well tolerated and has important benefits for treating arthritis and pain symptoms.

The decision follows an extensive benefit/risk review by the scientific committee of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMEA) which examined all available clinical data on selective COX-2 inhibitors to assess efficacy, gastrointestinal benefits and cardiovascular safety.

Pfizer, as it has throughout the process, will continue to work closely with CHMP and other regulatory agencies to ensure appropriate use of these medicines. In addition as previously prescribing advice issued in February 2005, additional precautions have been added in order that COX-2 medicines are prescribed appropriately and that individual patient needs and circumstances are considered.

"Overall this is good news for patients and physicians. The CHMP opinion marks the conclusion of the scientific review in the EU, and ensures that important treatment options such as Celebrex and Bextra are available to help manage the pain and inflammation which affects many people," said Dr. Joseph Feczko, Pfizer's president of worldwide development.

Selective COX-2 medicines were designed to relieve pain with fewer serious gastrointestinal side effects associated with NSAIDs. Celebrex, for example, which has been available in some 40 thousands of patients worldwide, has been shown to be effective in relieving pain and inflammation and does so with a lower incidence of the serious gastrointestinal side effects associated with older NSAIDs.

Separately, the NSAIDs enabled the use of Celebrex, a second name for celecoxib, where used in the cure, orphan indication of familial adenomatous polyposis, a precursor to colon cancer. Celebrex is the only medicine approved to treat this condition.

Rape victim gets support from Mukhtar Mai

MULTAN, Pakistan — A Pakistani woman who has become the latest victim of gang-rape ordered out as punishment against her family received a call of support Thursday from the woman whose similar case shone an international spotlight on the plight of women in some rural areas of this deeply conservative nation.

The latest attack is reminiscent of that of Mukhtar Mai, who was gang-raped in 2002 on orders of a village council, and is sure to increase concern that the government of President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has not succeeded in its pledge to end so-called "honor" attacks in which hundreds of women are killed, raped or maimed each year.

Both cases involve a woman targeted for punishment for the actions of a male relative.

The 30-year-old victim of the latest rape objected last two days ordered to a photo conversation with The Associated Press from her hometown of Chaniot, about 200 km northwest of Multan, in eastern Pakistan.

She said eight men kidnapped her on June 30 and took her to a house.

"They stripped me naked, forcibly poured alcohol in my mouth and asked me to dance," she said. The Associated Press does not publish the names of victims in such cases unless they voluntarily come forward, as Mukhtar in an effort to bring attention to the plight of women in Pakistan.

The newest victim, who is married and a mother of three, said she was raped while the men watched pornographic movies.

"I cried, begged and touched the feet of those men and asked them to spare me in the name of God and the Koran [Islam's holy book]," she said. "But they said we will teach your family a lesson."

The family accuses a man from the victim's family of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl from the attackers' family. But Mukhtar Bhatnagar, a local police official, said an investigation into that claim revealed the girl had eloped with the man voluntarily.

Mumtaz said police lawsuit of the June 30 rally's attack only on Tuesday, when the victim's family came forward and revealed her ordeal. Seven people have been arrested, and one man is still at large.

On Thursday, the victim received a call from Mai, who said she praised her for her courage in coming forward.

"I think most women can be saved from such incidents by punishing those who violated me and this woman," she said.

As men were sentenced to death in Mai's attack, but five of those sentences were commuted to life in prison. This year, a court threw out the cases of all 15 people originally charged in the rape, causing international outrage.

Concern was heightened by Musharraf's decision to bar Mai from traveling outside the country. The president, a key ally of Washington in its war on terror, argued he was afraid Mai would cast Pakistan in a bad light. After a sharp rebuke from the Bush administration, he reversed Mai's passport restraint and her same attacker from an exit control list.

Last week, Mai won a Supreme Court appeal overturning the acquittals of her attackers, who have been incarcerated and face new sentencing.

Mai said she plans to travel in the victim's absence to spare more details.

AP

Mars, Snickers chocolates to be destroyed in recall

SYDNEY, Australia — The manufacturer that recalled hundreds of thousands of Mars and Snickers bars following a contamination threat said Thursday there was no established link between ice products and illnesses reportedly people who ate the chocolates.

Masterfoods Australia New Zealand, the company that makes the Mars and Snickers bars in Australia, ordered the recall of both brands last week after receiving a letter claiming that some contaminated bars had been placed on shelves in the factory area.

The company's president, Andy Strauss-Wells, said about 30 people had called a special phone line to report various health complaints after eating the chocolate bars.

However, he said "no proper connection" had been made between the chocolates and the reported illness, which included stomach aches, diarrhea and headaches.

Strauss-Wells said the company planned to destroy hundreds of thousands of the recalled chocolates later this week to ensure that there were no risk of contamination.

"It will be done in a safe and supervised way," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "We just want to make sure we destroy them properly and safely."

Strauss-Wells said he has not yet seen financial figures on how the health scare will affect the company, and that Mars and Snickers bars will only be returned to store shelves once the company is confident they are safe.

A total of four letters have been sent to the company's headquarters in the southern city of Ballarat containing threats against an unidentified company that is not related to Masterfoods. Police say they don't know why Masterfoods was targeted.

The last letter, received on June 8, was issued a Snickers bar that was later found to be laced with cyanide-like substances.

AP

Pinochet loses immunity in rights case

SANTIAGO, Chile — A Chilean appeals court ruled by a narrow margin on Wednesday that former dictator Augusto Pinochet can face charges related to the 1975 cover-up of the killings of dozens of leftists, known as Operation Colombo.

PINOCHET

Judge Juan Escobar, president of the Santiago Appeals Court, told reporters that the court voted 11-10 to remove Pinochet's immunity from prosecution in the human rights case.

The decision for Pinochet, 89, is expected to appeal the ruling in the Supreme Court. Pinochet ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990, carried when more than 3,000 people died in political violence.

Judge Victor Montiglio, who is investigating and prosecuting the Operation Colombo case, wants to charge Pinochet with responsibility in covering up the murders of up to 119 political opponents including exiled rebels from the Revolutionary Leftist Movement.

The cover-up involved planting arms stories in Argentina and Brazil alleging that the guerrillas had died fighting among themselves.

Human rights lawyers say they were taken prisoners by Chile's secret police and killed.

"I'm sure those four are very happy with the decision to accept the prosecution's motion to remove immunity. If it is appealed, the Supreme Court should definitely uphold this ruling," said Lorena Quezada, a human rights attorney who represents families of the victims.

Chile has been ruled by a center-left coalition for 15 years, but up until recently public opinion on Pinochet was deeply divided. While many revile him, others admire what they say was his role in saving Chile from communism.

Reuters

PHILIPPINE PEDIATRIC SOCIETY, INC.
I N F O B O X

How young can a child develop an allergy?

What can cause the allergy?

What are the signs and symptoms of seasonals allergy?

What are the signs and symptoms of allergy?

My baby is having bottle-fed. He has been having skin rash on the cheeks and the scalp. Could it be he is allergic to his milk?

How do you differentiate atopic dermatitis(AD) from seborrheic dermatitis?

Can allergy be life threatening?

My child has atopic dermatitis, will he develop asthma later on?

My child has allergy to chicken and seafood. Can he outgrow it?

How does one acquire allergy? Is it from the environment or hereditary?

Is there first aid for hives?

My child often develops morning colds/ sneezing. Is this allergic rhinitis? Does he need any medication?

Allergy ALERT!

Aksyon Iwas-Allergy!

an educational grant from

in collaboration of

THE MORE AFFORDABLE 24-HOUR,
once a day, non-drowsy allergy relief for children.

LORATADINE

ALLERTA

2004 INQUIRER Vol. XX No. 219

OPINION

Publisher Isaac Tiaoqui
Editor-in-Chief/CEO Jose Ma. Nolasco
Managing Editor Joaquin C. Gonzalez III
Associate Editor Alejandro G. Alcantara
Associate Editor for Readership Rosario M. Bautista
Assistant Managing Editor Antonio T. Calasanz Jr.
Opinion Editor Ismael V. Reyes
International Editor Francisco S. Tatad Jr.
City Editor Cesar Lim
Assistant City Editor Juan P. Soliman III
Editorial Consultant Augusto Villalon
Chief Photographer Raul S. Gatbonton
Art & Design Director Lyndi P. A. Valdez

Executive Assistant Maria M. Padilla
President Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez
Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing Manuel R. Romero
Senior Vice President for Corporate Services Ernil B. Valdez
Vice President for Advertising Ruth R. Suarez
Vice President for Circulation Elena P. Lansigan

All rights reserved. No part or parts may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the written permission of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. Unauthorized use may give rise to a civil suit and criminal prosecution.

Missing link

THE INSIDER of someone before the House committees holding joint hearings has so far failed to include the man who should be front and center in the inquiry: Former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano has been notable for his absence, and general silence, punctuated only by occasional, feisty statements as to his position. The fact is, of the two most controversial principals in the recorded conversations, only President Macapagal-Arroyo has been heard from. Garcillano still has to speak to the public, and much more importantly, be heard.

EDITORIAL

Whether or not Garcillano's statements will be predictable, since he has already telegraphed to the media his stand, is beside the point. His continued to be virtually unreachable, his location the subject of the most extreme speculations. His being a free agent is in doubt, and those doubts can only serve to put the President and the military to doubt. Neither the President nor the military deserve to be subjected to such doubts at this time.

At the very least, Garcillano is entitled to give his side to Congress and the country. The public deserves to know what exactly Garcillano will stand by as his version of the truth. Considering how the Commission on Elections has been tarnished and dressed-down by recent revelations, he owes it to that institution of which he used to be a member to set the record straight.

To clear the air, the former commissioner also should inform the public what he has been up to during his long period of absence from the public eye. The question of his physical location, as we've said, has been a cause for a lot of speculations. It can either harm or help his case to explain what he has been meeting with, under what circumstances, and for what purpose.

There is, of course, the possibility that, holding as much information about so many political personages, both in the administration and the opposition, Garcillano could be keeping mum in the interest of both sides. This unilateral does not help the country or the public's desire to clarify a confusing situation.

As things stand, all Garcillano has accomplished by talking on the phone to the Inquirer is to increase the number of politicians who need to explain their conversations with him. The reaction of the opposition, and even the administration, indicates that Garcillano may be partially telling the truth or even telling the whole truth, in which case comes the question of whether the politicians issuing denials are themselves telling the whole truth. In other words, he has only increased public disdain and not increased public confidence.

The necessary reforms will be delayed until and unless our lawmakers and the public know exactly what improprieties or unethical practices, which may be legal at present but which should be made illegal, took place. We have already canvassed those necessary reforms earlier. And we should add that since Garcillano is no longer an election commissioner, a reason must be found to hold him accountable for his actions. Due process must prevail, and part of due process is for the known canvass-sinner to be given an opportunity to confront his accusers, and defend his reputation, such as it is.

We believe that public expectations are such that from the highest official in the land on down, there will be some sort of accounting for their actions. The nature of that accounting is what the public is trying to discern. Even the process by which this accounting should be undertaken is being debated. But all reasonable people realize that this must be done with the highest regard to individual and community rights and within the parameters of the law and the highest law, the Constitution.

Furthermore, it is not enough to be witnesses to the shortcomings of our officials, but to find ways to present opportunities for lapses in judgment or outright violations of ethics and the law. This process is independent of Congress. It is a process that must be undertaken by the people. The future, once more, must be in the hands of the sovereign people, and not merely in the hands of our officials.

Kilosbayan speaks out on 'Gloriagate'

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE CALL made to the Inquirer by former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to admit that he did talk on the phone with President Macapagal-Arroyo, like he did with members of the opposition, was obviously meant to bolster the argument that the President did no wrong in calling him during a crucial time in the election. Opposition vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, as well as administration foe, Mar Roxas, among those mentioned by Garcillano, denied unanimously that they had talked to him. It is to Garcillano's word against theirs.

It's a true that Legarda, Escudero and Roxas phoned Lacsi, who at their request met on top of the wiretapped tapes of him talking with many persons? It was obviously Lacsi's phone that was tapped as were his very personal conversations with family members were recorded.

Even assuming that other politicians did call Lacsi, those are different from the President of the Philippines, a candidate in the election, calling an election official, whom she had appointed, in a separate line, while appropriately being counted and canvassed to ask about how her margin of votes could be increased.

Passages from the position paper of Rilosbayan and Sunday Kasarangan reasons are very relevant:

"It is no valid excuse," said the paper, "that congressmen, senators, and other candidates for public office have also tried to influence the actuations of Comelec officials engaged in the counting and canvassing of votes.

"Insisting that could be true in many cases, we believe that such answer (1) is one which does not justify another wrong; (2) other officials may cheat and lie, but the President of the land, who occupies the highest position within the gift of our people, is expected to be. Bet of all, honest, fair and truthful. In our view, more important than incumbent is character, more important than competence is integrity, more important than industry is honest toil."

The paper said a few paragraphs earlier, "Malicious expediency to remain in power, not contravention of self to serve the nation has been GMA's style. We consider that high public officials entitled power is without entering into any valid compromises. But there are times that are less than more no compromises of truth and justice. The existence dictates that by entering into all sorts of morally indefensible compromises with those who are involved in graft and corruption such as the plunder of the nation's wealth, the government has been unable to enforce to a regime of justice with an orderly process of transparency and public accountability. Which explains why some honest, incorruptible public officials have resigned. Those who should be prosecuted are not only here but are also back in power, with their actions unchecked.

"GMA's legitimacy and title to the presidency are seen in grave doubt because of the so-called 'Hyatt 10' tapes. The 'hatong pa-ube' allegedly paid in her son, Rep. Juan Miguel 'Mikey' Arroyo, and the reported involvement of the First Gentleman in shady deals may be mitigated by their prolonged leave of absence as representative from Pampanga, in the case of Mikey, and indefinite self-exile abroad, in the case of Mike Arroyo. But these may not be enough to stop the clamor for her resignation from the presidency, or by her eventual ouster through impeachment, however unlikely at this point."

Kilosbayan and Sunday Kasarangan also called for the immediate revamp of the Comelec because of the coming elections in the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao this Aug. 9, only a month from now.

The two organizations had filed plunder and graft charges against all the commissioners of the Comelec, and the conspiring private individuals, the incorporators and directors of Mega Pacific e-Solutions Inc. for the "fraudulent award of the contract to equity-uncounted counting machines (MCMs) that were to be used for the May 10, 2004 national elections." Until now, the Ombudsman has not decided on those cases.

The complaint alleged that Comelec withdrew from the Land Bank, its depository bank, the amount of P1.05 billion, which was supposed to be paid to MPEI, actually the true amount paid by the Comelec to MPEI for the AOM, through the facilities of Metrobank, was only P656 million. What happened to the rest of the money?

"The purchase of 1,991 AOMs from Mega Pacific e-Solutions Inc. was illegal, fraudulent and overcostly, overpriced," said Kilosbayan.

The Comelec award was nullified by the Supreme Court which directed the solicitor general to become the P1.25-billion quest for the AOMs from the papers. The Ombudsman was specifically directed to determine the criminal liability of Comelec commissioners, bids and auctioneers and their confederates in the questionable deal.

The tempting of the fed-up Filipino

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

"RESPECT the Constitution!" seems to be the most politically acceptable slogan of the hour. Yet history shows that our legal system has time and again shown its ambivalence to extraconstitutional challenges. Only time, we or a people have earned deliberately.

Marcos governed under the 1973 Constitution, which was approved by a mere sliver of hands when we were under martial law—woefully short of what the law required. Recently, a proper plebiscite with appropriate safeguards. Yet the Supreme Court said, so what if it was illegal as long as the people have accepted the new Constitution? The sovereign people have spoken, who are we to sound in the way?

The Court added: "If [the people] had risen up in arms and by force deposed the then existing government . . . there could not be the least doubt that their act would . . . not be subject to judicial review . . . We do not see [this] situation [as] be any different . . . if no force had been employed in the complete abolition of the existing Constitution but peacefully . . . to darned a new Constitution."

Until Marcos was ousted at Edsa I in 1986, the nation's liberals and democrats extolled the infamous decision to judicial capitulation, as in the dark days of the Marcos, as too much "judicial statesmanship."

After Edsa I, however, the Court similarly invoked the "political question doctrine" to uphold Cory Aquino's government, but this time, the same liberals and democrats applauded with gusto. Cory promptly junked her "Freedom Constitution," not by revision or replacement, but through the "direct exercise of the power of the Filipino people." The Supreme Court justices, all Cory appointees, found that she became president "in violation of the provisions of the 1973 Constitution or . . . Mr. Marcos [had already been declared] the winner in the [snap] elections" and that her government was "revolutionary in the sense that it came into existence in defiance of existing legal processes"—but its legitimacy was "not a justiciable matter (but) belongs to the realm of politics where only the people . . . are the judge."

Constitutionalism faced its next challenge at Edsa II, when people power ousted a democratically elected president, Joseph Estrada. Then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo could take over only in case of his death, permanent disability, resignation or removal, or resignation. But Erap was alive, able, not impeached, and had not resigned. The Court could have taken the path of least resistance and invoked the political question doctrine, exactly the way it did in the earlier cases. Or, the Court could have institutionalized people power unabashedly and said that Erap was "incapacitated," not by sickness but by indicted political pundits through "willful refusal of support" by various centers of power in government, including the military and civil society.

But no, the Court held that, unlike Cory who was ousted about the extra-constitutional character of her government, GMA had assumed office smugly under the present Constitution. Thus, the either creative version that Erap had "constructively resigned" based not on his resignation letter but on the slippery facts. Mute telling however were the warnings by the other justices about the "beating the drum," the "tantara paths of people power," and their "despicable [Edsa] the use of people power" [an amorphous . . . concept] to express a change in the presidency [can turn well] encouraging] Dwight Donne There People Power Four, and People Power 60 infinitum."

I cited all these in a May 2001 lecture for the Supreme Court's Centennial, but I could not have imagined we would have the power of that mother (Ina) to the realm of politics where only the people . . . are the judge."

Constitutionalism faced its next challenge at Edsa II, when people power ousted a democratically elected president, Joseph Estrada. Then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo could take over only in case of his death, permanent disability, resignation or removal, or resignation. But Erap was alive, able, not impeached, and had not resigned. The Court could have taken the path of least resistance and invoked the political question doctrine, exactly the way it did in the earlier cases. Or, the Court could have institutionalized people power unabashedly and said that Erap was "incapacitated," not by sickness but by indicted political pundits through "willful refusal of support" by various centers of power in government, including the military and civil society.

But no, the Court held that, unlike Cory who was ousted about the extra-constitutional character of her government, GMA had assumed office smugly under the present Constitution. Thus, the either creative version that Erap had "constructively resigned" based not on his resignation letter but on the slippery facts. Mute telling however were the warnings by the other justices about the "beating the drum," the "tantara paths of people power," and their "despicable [Edsa] the use of people power [can amorphous . . . concept] to express a change in the presidency [can turn well] encouraging] Dwight Donne There People Power Four, and People Power 60 infinitum."

I cited all these in a May 2001 lecture for the Supreme Court's Centennial, but I could not have imagined we would have the power of that

mother (Ina) to the realm of politics where only the people . . . are the judge."

prophecy so soon with GMA's June 2001 "spiel-ity."

All the Sunday boat papers in the major dailies showed wonderful photos of a teller, Ms. Evelyn Flores, Government policies in self-lighting to jam the right here and in the quiet of her condo, doing what we all had longed for her to do: sit down and use her God-given talents to solve our country's problems. Her campaigners had designated her opponent as a high school dropout, and extolled her PhD's in economics. If you voted for her because of her superior brains, congratulations; on Sunday, she finally sat down to use them.

Until then, she was content with photo ops, attending prayer rallies here, distributing relief goods there, Government policies in self-line on paper, but were hostage to politics in practice, negotiable at every turn, to pay for every political debt, or salvage each passing tongue by some legal trope. And, as the Court ruled recently, no government office was too essential for her to be sacked.

The Comelec is an independent constitutional body yet "Cusi" could speak to "Bayan" about staging the riots ("nang pinalaglagan nito"). The Constitution speaks of a "professional" armed forces "insulated from politics," yet the Palace Government's efforts to make us act like Gobbels Media organ. Eh, eh, and that "debut" operation to prevent a utilization from testifying—that's straight from "The Godfather," left about dead in quoting Scripture.

What exactly does the Rule of Law mean? It doesn't mean the mechanical application of rules. Rather it means government through accountable institutions that can be held to respect our fundamental rights, including the sanctity of our vote. Uphold the Constitution, by all means, but don't use it as a refuge for politics and for time-serving. Uphold institutions, by all means, but don't use them for your aims nor upon "the letter that killeth but (upon) the spirit that giveth life."

• • •

Comments to rmail@pldtdsl.net

GMA's survival depends on three strategic sectors

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

THE DEBUT of the beleaguered government of President Macapagal Arroyo hangs on the balance as the Philippine Catholic Church hierarchy begins the weekend to examine its position on whether to throw its weight behind the movement seeking the immediate resignation of the President.

Events clamoring for the President's resignation have erupted in the midst of the Church campaign, but Church leaders so far to mobilize a mass base for direct action has until the crisis of confidence over Mrs. Arroyo's leadership to a crescendo that has pushed the country toward economic paralysis.

With few visible signs of a groundswell to back the campaign, as ministers before now focuses its attention on how much support the administration still receives from three critical sectors which provide the foundations for regime stability and survival: the Church, the business community and the military.

Without the crowds pouring out in the streets on the scale that propelled Joseph Ejercito Estrada II, the Church's campaign appears to cripple the Arroyo administration now depend less on people-power manifestations and more on which way those three traditional wings. A withdrawal of support from the government by any of these sectors will spell a death knell to a democratic order that could precipitate the collapse of the regime.

The Church's strategy is announced with the call for two-week against a virus constitutional solutions from Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, also, who warned in a pastoral letter last July 1 against tendencies opposed by some bishops seeking extra-constitutional means, could trigger a big bloodbath precisely because it is the way to avoid the bloodshed.

The timing of the Church's campaign is crucial to the regime's survival.

The timing of the Church's campaign is crucial to the regime's survival.

The timing is announced with the call for two-week against a virus constitutional solutions from Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, also, who warned in a pastoral letter last July 1 against tendencies opposed by some bishops seeking extra-constitutional means, could trigger a big bloodbath precisely because it is the way to avoid the bloodshed. Besides made is emphatically clear that the Church should reject violence as the tools to resolve the impasse, saying that "any proposed solution ... that relies on, or leads to, violence is unacceptable."

As the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, composed of 86 active and 24 retired bishops, goes into its plenary meeting on July 11 to 16, the leadership of Basilio as the permanent prelate of the Philippine Church will be put to a test.

The dilemma of the Church was defined by Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez of Cabanatuan, who said the archdiocese faced "three alternative courses of action: "impeachment" of the President, if evidence warrants, status quo or resignation. He said there were the "three perceptions" that had emerged from the deliberations of the bishops.

A CBCP source told the press that the conference was expected to formulate a "unified stand." The search for a unified stand underlined fears in the hierarchy that unless it takes a unified position, the Church's moral influence in resolving the crisis could be weakened.

The bishops are coming to grips with the issue of their identity and lack of a convening leadership, following the death of Jaime Cardinal Sin. The former archdiocese of Manila is divided like CBCP into two streams, with one seeking to confine the conflict to the streets and the other seeking to direct it into constitutional channels.

Because of the pivotal role of the Church in the people-power explosions that toppled two presidents, the decision of the CBCP and its capacity to close ranks and speak with one unified voice now being closely watched by the two other strategic sectors—the business community and the military. Also watching is the large church's body of civil society that has remained conspicuous so far in calls for stepped-up street action base, a noisy minority claiming to reflect the "overwhelming" demand of the people for the President's immediate resignation. The bishops' decision could give momentum to the street campaign demanding the President's resignation or soften the scenario to the legal framework.

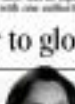
Because the street action option has so far failed to gather the critical mass that could force the President to resign, withdrawal of support by strategic sectors has increasingly become attractive as an alternative approach to bring down the GMA administration.

The fall of the Estrada government in 2001 follows the argument that when the Church, the business community and the military withdrew support from government, it could topple the government. Even before the fall of the Estrada government, the Church and the Makati business community stopped lending their support to the regime. The mass movements in the streets came later, following the desertion of business and the Church, weakening the government's mass political base. This was followed by the desertion of half of the Cabinet, which gave the cue for the withdrawal of support by the military. The final blow came when the armed stalemate between the Estrada forces and those backed by people power by the closure of the second envelope in the impeachment trial of Estrada.

At present, the business sector is holding ranks behind the Arroyo government, although basic concerns have been raised about the political crisis and the setback suffered by the government's fiscal reform program, following the suspension by the Supreme Court of the expanded value-added tax. The Church has remained fragmented. Its bishops, on each occasion, have differed. Such divisions would be the catalyst of survival or collapse of the Arroyo government.

From schoolteacher to global trainer

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

HER "prophetic el dorado" who say the call center industry is cashing but a dead end for the Philippine economy. Make her provides an antidote of optimism. And for thousands of Filipinos working in the various call centers in Metro Manila and other urban centers, she provides not just a role model but a real-life success story.

Currently director for Global Communication and Culture for Convergys, the market leader in the global call center industry, she is living proof for those recently young employees that, at the ripe old age of 43 as an agent (as those who take customer calls are called), and who, eight years later, now works as director for the company.

Her story is not unique, but it is one that is full of promise. It challed up $2.5 billion in revenues last year, and currently employs more than 46,000 agents deployed in 60 countries and operating in 20 languages. In Asia, Convergys has set up operations in India, China and the Philippines, where it has been present in the country, having set up shop early in April 2003, but growing as a lucrative pace since. Being "employer Number 3" in the Philippines, Inc. is in a position to see the pros and cons of the how much local operations have grown.

"The goal was to have 2,000 employees by 2006," she recalls. "Today we have 3,000 and growing."

Born in Seoul in Jacksonville, Florida, where the company's corporate campus is located. Its company headquarters are in Cincinnati, Ohio). But for other industries not just for Convergys' local employees and all those working in the field, but for all employers, here is a positive success story that appears to show

Walking 2 miles to return a penny

HUGHT wisdom offers this advice—a simple yet profound formula to guide everyone who leads, anyone who aspires to leadership: "Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly."

Warren Bennis said, "Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing."

So you make your choices and create your wake, remember your power and influence. Use your people with mercy and adopt your communications so they see

No one will storm Malacañang to install Noli

ELORA Macapagal-Arroyo will remain President of our country and survive this crisis, notwithstanding calls for her resignation and impeachment.

The "Hello Garci" tapes will push its popularity, perhaps for a few more months, and then she is assured (much) when everyone starts losing interest in them and as their novelty wears out.

The looming scandal will reflect a terrible loss. The investigation being conducted by Congress, (other than nothing new with hard facts, has just shown the Filipino people how to waste so much precious time, money and energy.

It's a mockery of the democratic process. Congress is supposed to be the highest deliberative body in the land, but it has become a circus.

Where were the leaders of the House of Representatives when the tapes were released? Why did they not immediately call for a session in aid of legislation? Why did they not immediately form a committee to investigate the tapes? Why did they not immediately summon the principals and witnesses to the tapes? Why did they not immediately issue subpoenas to the principals and witnesses to the tapes? Why did they not immediately cite in contempt those who refused to appear before the committee? Why did they not immediately order the arrest of those who refused to obey the subpoenas? Why did they not immediately order the arrest of those who refused to obey the contempt citations?

Why did they not immediately do all these things? Because they are not serious about getting to the truth. They are not serious about finding out who is telling the truth and who is telling lies. They are not serious about finding out who is guilty and who is innocent. They are not serious about finding out who is corrupt and who is honest. They are not serious about finding out who is a traitor and who is a patriot. They are not serious about finding out who is a criminal and who is a victim. They are not serious about finding out who is a liar and who is a truth-teller. They are not serious about finding out who is a thief and who is a benefactor. They are not serious about finding out who is a murderer and who is a savior. They are not serious about finding out who is a coward and who is a hero. They are not serious about finding out who is a fool and who is a genius. They are not serious about finding out who is a saint and who is a sinner. They are not serious about finding out who is a devil and who is an angel. They are not serious about finding out who is a god and who is a mortal. They are not serious about finding out who is a king and who is a peasant. They are not serious about finding out who is a queen and who is a commoner. They are not serious about finding out who is a president and who is a citizen. They are not serious about finding out who is a senator and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a congressman and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a governor and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a mayor and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a barangay captain and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a police officer and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a soldier and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a teacher and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a doctor and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a nurse and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a lawyer and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a judge and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a prosecutor and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a public defender and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court clerk and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court stenographer and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court interpreter and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court bailiff and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court process server and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court sheriff and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court marshal and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court reporter and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court clerk and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court stenographer and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court interpreter and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court bailiff and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court process server and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court sheriff and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court marshal and who is a constituent. They are not serious about finding out who is a court reporter and who is a constituent.

Right but wrong

CAN you blame the Israelis for having Ambassador Antonio Modena?

It is just right for any Filipino citizen to fight for the right of his countrymen especially if the "kababayan" are being maltreated and the problem is not addressed even if it has been reported in the government concerned.

But the good ambassador, Modena, should have realized that he is not a journalist (a brand but a diplomat) and he should not have resorted those provoked "foul words," more so to the press.

Even as Filipinos many-many times resign nationals, especially diplomats, make undiplomatic remarks about our homeland or our country. Here we forgave him some of us resorted to the statements of US Charge d'affaires Joseph Mussomeli?

—ERICKSON RUIZ,
3 (1002 La Rada Towne, Makati City

On Susan Roces

Gov. Aquino calls for people power when it runs her and her family. She did not like President Joseph Estrada to, of course, people power had to be used against him. And since Susan Roces for a somewhat allied with Estrada, of course, we should not have people power for the sake of the country. I am not surprised by the actions and logic of Susan Roces and her messages. She is a

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

[illegible] Roces is a [illegible] [illegible] that Aquino will ever be.—Sandra Reyes, Mango Avenue, Cebu City

Susan, try to be realistic. What do you know about politics? Good governance, I think, is achieved by a combination of different factors like an in-depth knowledge of the Constitution and the law, the ability to establish good foreign and international relationships, the ability to assert authority and make critical decisions, humanitarianism, an ability to lead the country with honesty, integrity and dignity and be a role model and set a good example by one's actions.

While there is no one person or leader that you see (or know individual who has dignity and integrity worthy of admiration), there are not enough to make you an ideal president to lead the country and try to solve problems already plaguing the country.

What if there is a summit meeting or conference with other world leaders, would you be confident enough or relieve to show on your own? Im sure Imelda better than you your limitations, so please don't try to stretch them far beyond your capability.

What you can do is just support the ideal politician who you think will be able to achieve your vision for the nation. You don't seem to become the individual who will be doing the Philippines' top job by virtue of the sympathy you will deserve because of your late husband's fate. While it is a common trait among Filipinos to be sympathetic and to always go for the underdog, the presidency you seem to be eyeing is a very critical and sensitive post. We don't need to be sentimental on this one. We need to be light at all times. Only through this, perhaps, can we Filipinos live decent lives.

So please, please, please, for the love of God and country, try to think as many times as you can, before deciding to seek the presidency.—Eusebio Antonio, Mollescamen, Victoria 3175, Australia

Oh, let's say President Macapagal-Arroyo gives in. Who will then you as her replacement... Susan Roces? Sec Cayetano? Tito Sotto? I have nothing personal against those people, but does the opposition think they can deliver? I am not an Arroyo supporter nor an opposition supporter; I am just concerned for my country. The Philippines' future is in limbo, its social mess is getting worse, and only a good president can make the country rise again. The question is, who?—Greg Mercurio, 24225 Harvard Avenue, Baldwin Park, CA/USA

Susan Roces in her speech was like a child crying because she lost a toy. Remember that if there was choosing (but I believe there was none) during the last election, it was for the good of the country. We were lucky that Fernando Poe Jr. was not elected. It is a shame that with all our graduates from good universities, we could not find a qualified politician to run for president. Instead, we had a high school dropout who could hardly speak English. Are the people of the Philippines insane?—Raul Kamedi, 4449 Boyar Ave. L.B. CA 90807

Edith Villanueva said she asked some grassroots peasants and that the Filipino people are mature enough to decide who their leader would be. Jesus, isn't it? Look at the people who are leading the protest right now—a Marcos daughter, an Estrada son, and the cronies of former corrupt presidents.

Hmmm? We are trying to face a duly elected official out of office like us? You have no idea who will lead the country. Mayor? You say make Susan Roces our new leader. She has no experience at all in politics. She herself said that she doesn't want the position. What do you think will happen to our already poor country if someone like Roces becomes the president? Will she have the respect of other countries that can help improve our economic situation? Will she know how to govern without "cabinets and managers" by her side just waiting to run her? (I hope that these people have plans on how to make the country better rather than have our die-current administration and just hope for the best. If you really love our country, support the Constitution. It is the only right and moral way. Anarchy is never a part of democracy.—Ted Obiena, Poor Clarent Oblo, USA

Ping Patiño ang speech ni Susan Roces. Hindi ay American pinagmumumuran lang ako.—Bing Gabriel, 11 Olde Country Drive, 32 San Bernardo, New Jersey, USA

Susan Roces is an honey! She is really an actress, the best actress of the Philippine movie industry. Sorry to say that she is not capable of becoming the Philippine president.—Marilyn Cancel, 63 Emily St., Bergenfield, New Jersey 07621

I would like to react to Susan Roces' statement. She called President Macapagal-Arroyo arrogant but look who's talking. She's only religion. She doesn't even know the law of the land. Sy, Mr. Arroyo admitted that she spoke with a Comelec Commission on Electoral official, but she did not admit that she cheated in the last election. Let's follow what the Constitution provides.—Enrico Sarina, 74 Nassey Avenue, Queens City

Across the NATION

"Have your say! Feedback: inquirer.net | overnight@inquirer.com.ph | 24/F 20 Ortigas Ave. | 300 Ortigas | Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Vice mayor killed; town cops axed

AQUINO

By Yolanda Sarmiento-Fuentes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAGADAN, Pangasinan—Vice Mayor Rodolfo Aquino had just swum from a session of the local council and was walking to some people here on Wednesday night when a man approached and shot him in the head and body.

Aquino, 56, a member of the Iglesia ni Cristo, died while rushing for treatment at the Region 1 Medical Center in Dagupan City at 8:45 p.m.

Aquino's bodyguard, Victor Villanueva, tried to grab the assailant's gun but he too was shot in the chest. Villanueva died while undergoing surgery at the Region 1 Medical Center in Dagupan City at 8 p.m.

The attack happened a few minutes from the town's police station.

Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, went to the town on Thursday and boosted the task force organized to investigate the murder.

He ordered the task force, headed by Supt. Edgar Soabon, deputy provincial police director, to submit a report in three days.

Lomibao also relieved Chief Insp. Reynaldo Tolentino, town police chief, and the entire police force on Thursday "because the northern Lingayen police force has been linked to the police station."

The 1987 Constitution also ordered the 20 policemen in the town "to obey functional assignments" to allow them to investigate the killing.

Lomibao said he doesn't want to conclude at this point (as we are looking) at all angles and all motives that could possibly lead to solution of the case," Lomibao said.

After shooting Aquino and his driver, the suspect, who was said to be between 25 and 30 years old, ran to the cemetery. Aquino's brother, Dadong, tried to chase him but the suspect shot at pursuers.

Mayor Ferdinand Calimlim asked his townspeople to be calm following the killing.

PDI correspondent 'persona non grata'

LUCBAN CITY—An allegedly unnerving debate, stern words and shouting discrepancy to become par. Gov. Armando Baladad during an interview on Monday because correspondents Mel Magsino-Lubit has been declared persona non grata by the provincial's mayor's budget.

In a resolution dated July 2, the 15 municipal mayors who signed the resolution called Lubit's article the most severe untrue coming of a journalist.

According to Lucban in his affidavit, Lubit showed the words, "I suggest governor that you go back to Grade One and learn good manners and right conduct. Bumalik ka at mag-aral uli," after he ended the interview with the business correspondent.

"I felt unduly humiliated. I was shocked and embarrassed beyond words, if she had no respect to my person, she could have at least shown respect for the office of the governor," Lucban said.

However, Lubit vehemently denied Lucban's allegation. On the contrary she said it was Lucban who shouted insectives at her.

"I be shocked on many occasions and cursed all more the place that I packed my notebook into my bag and stood up. I told him 'kung sa Ingles ang pagsasalita ko, hindi dito ka sa akin, mabuhay lang. Ano naman sa inyo kung nagsasalita ako ng Ingles?'" Lubit said.

She added, "Sometime was already dawning at me, despite my low voice telling him in private about my flaws words to me, I told him that I cannot in his office upon his invitation through provincial legal officer Minerva Dimaano and I requested to be treated like an invited guest, and not treated as humility as this." —Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Mayor denies 'partong'

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—Mayor Ernesto Castañeda said this capital town has been parking-free for seven months now. Castañeda said the numbers game attached to the appointment of "Lt." refers to Gerardo Partong, who is the "Lingayen Engayen is giving the town a bad reputation, especially because it is [the] capital town of Pangasinan and this makes the provincial police headquarters are located," he said. He said he would file charges against the Pangasinan reporter on July 7. Ted Mayo publishing was "after it Lingayen." —Yolanda Quijano Fuentes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Traders appeal to LTO

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Businessmen here have asked the Land Transportation Office to allow motorists arrested by traffic violators in the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) to retrieve their licenses from the place where they were arrested. Richard Ed going to the Land Transportation Office in Region 3 in Clark Field, Pampanga. Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Pam Chamber) said it was impossible to locate and to impossible for motorists in the province to travel to Quezon City just to retrieve their confiscated licenses. Pam Chamber said they have said motorists, mostly those arrested for violating the speed limit, should be given an option to retrieve their licenses from other LTO branches in Central Luzon. —Jun Alvarez, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Tricycle ban sought

BAGUIO, Philippines—Tourism and residents have asked officials to reject a proposal to ban tricycles in this tourist town to prevent pollution.

Councilor Dave Sotto said the proposed ordinance only aims to control traffic and avoid public holes and

air pollution. Members of Baguio Environmental Coalition Reno Molino and Gregorio Dacawi and Drivers Association said the move would affect Baguio's nature beauty. Residents from eastern and southern parts of Baguio, however, said they agreed to the use of tricycles because there are climbing and are not suitable for motors. —Dexter Cabalza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Coco lumber seized

SAN PASCUAL—Mr. Laguna—After seizing a truckload of illegally cut coconut lumber last Friday, elements of the police Regional Mobile Group (RMG) in Calabarzon intercepted a 10-wheel truck containing 12,000 board feet of lumber worth P1 million. The truck was loaded with coconut lumber and was being driven by Rodolfo Tolentino, 40, of Barangay Magsaysay, Calamba City, at around 3:30 a.m. —Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Pontifical and Royal
UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS
The Catholic University of the Philippines

AN APPEAL FOR THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH TO SAVE OUR NATION

(Statement of the University of Santo Tomas)

The Filipino nation stands again at the crossroads, unable to march forward as she is held back by division and discord. The controversies besieging the very legitimacy of the presidency and other political scandals come at a very sensitive moment when the nation is being besieged by the high regime of world oil prices and other economic woes. Surely the nation does not need the crippling political crises to aggravate the poverty of the general masonry of the people.

The crisis needs to be resolved quickly and effectively or else the nation will continue to hemorrhage, probably beyond repatriation. All Filipinos of faith and goodwill must work together to save the nation.

At the heart of the crisis is evasion of the truth. The carefully worded confessions of the President owning to a "lapse in judgment," the later committee congressional inquiry on alleged wire-tapped conversation purportedly between the President and an election official, the proliferation of the conversations through electronic means, some media reportage and commentaries - all of these seem to be working towards evading rather than revealing the truth. They amount to nothing but shadow play, with the truth cast in ever darkening pallor.

Certainly there is a need to establish the truth outside the pale of shadowy players. The truth has been held hostage by those whose interest is to score political points at the expense of the larger national interest. The truth is being used at the service of falsehood. "What can be made clean by the unclean? And what truth can come from that which is false?" (Jeremiahes 24:4)

There is a need, therefore, to depoliticize the truth and truth-seeking. As such, we call *for the establishment of a Truth Commission* by *non-partisan sectors* enjoying general social acceptance such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, religious sector, the academe, business, and NGOs. It will be the task of the Commission to ferret out the truth, establish culpability, and impose sanctions and restitutions. The political branches of the government — the Executive and the Legislative — must agree to the establishment of the Commission, submit to its summons, and cooperate with it wholeheartedly.

It is important that truth and its pursuit must be managed well, lest it worsen the instability of the country. Toward this, all attempts to resolve the crisis should conform to the constitution and the rule of law. We urge the media, in particular, to discharge their duties with the view to public service and with faithful adherence to the tenets of a free and responsible press, taking care to report information that is accurate, objective, fair and balanced. We enjoin the people to keep an open mind and apply the resources of reason in winnowing the chaff of lies and do not listen the grain of truth. We counsel calm and sobriety in these hysterical times. We call on all to refrain from violence and to respect the rule of law.

But the search for truth, in times of crisis, may prove torturous and unsettling. Oftentimes, it is the poor who are always at the punishing end of every crisis. They are the ones that reap the consequences of the turbulence and bear the burden. Therefore, we call on government to immediately institute measures to alleviate the plight of the poor by applying social safety nets to its programs of liberalizing the economy, taking care, for example, that its mobilization of resources would not unduly compromise the poor and add further to their already crushing yoke. We urge business and all sectors of society to help lighten the burden of the poor.

The University of Santo Tomas pledges its support to the nation's quest for the truth. Even before the crisis reached fever pitch, she has been hosting dialogues and discussions among leaders and members of society and the Church to clear the issues and arrive at sound and effective responses. Reaffirming her mission to foster truth in charity, the University will continue to host the dialogues. She also vows unity with the poor at this most difficult time and joins the rest of Filipino society in easing their burden.

Something beautiful may yet emerge from the crisis—a people's solidarity with the truth. Let us make this a singular moment for us as a people. Let us banish lies and deceit, taking care to remember the injunction of Saint Thomas Aquinas against falsehood for its capacity to ruin the society. Let us give heed to the call of St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (4:25). Truly, we live together in society, and this is rendered impossible if we do not speak the truth to one another. Let us uphold the truth. Let us be a nation of truth seekers.

Veritas in Caritate
"Seeking the Truth *In Love*"

"Be on watch and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all these things..." (Luke 21:36)

Ship catches fire off Zamboanga Norte

ZAMBOANGA CITY —A passenger ship owned by Sulpicio Lines caught fire off Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte around noon yesterday.

The ship, MV Princess of the World, sailed from Manila for this city with about 118 passengers and 103 crew members, naval authorities and a Sulpicio official, told the INQUIRER.

INQGRAPHIC: ISAMBO

Commodore Rufino Lopez Jr., commander of the Naval Forces in Western Mindanao, said the ship, which was to dock at the pier here around 4 p.m., suddenly caught fire while sailing in Dulungin Point, about 60 nautical miles from this city around 11 a.m.

He said the distress call was placed by one of the five sea marshals aboard the ship.

Authorities have fielded antiterror teams onboard commercial ships following the February 2004 bombing of Superferry 14 near Manila.

Terrorists' work

Over a hundred people perished in the incident that was blamed on the Abu Sayyaf.

"We don't know yet the cause of fire," Lopez said in reply to queries whether or not the incident was a result of sabotage.

Lopez said authorities immediately alerted other sea vessels in the area while Navy and Coast Guard operatives were sent to rescue the troubled ship.

"We also radioed all big and small fishing vessels with communications (equipment) and the Philippine Air Force to conduct search and rescue operation," he said.

Commodore Alenjandro Flora Jr., chief of the Philippine Coast Guard in the Southwestern Mindanao District, said they also sought help from US Forces here, who sent two Navy patrol craft.

Ramon Ho, manager of the Sulpicio Lines here, said the passengers were ordered to abandon ship when the fire broke out.

"Our crew members tried to put off the fire," he said.

Smoke

As of 4:30 p.m., smoke from the ship can be seen from the shore.

Ho said no casualty had been reported and that another Sulpicio-owned ship, MV Princess of the Carribean, sailed from Dumaguete City to pick up the passengers of the ill-fated ship.

The rescued passengers, some of them picked up from lifeboats by Navy and Coast Guard personnel, were brought to the Sta. Maria Port in Siocon.

Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, Western Mindanao police chief, said about 200 people from the ill-fate ship were in Sta. Maria already.

It was not clear, however, if they included some of the crew members.

The Princess of the World came from Manila on Tuesday then passed by Iloilo City.

Aborted schedule

It sailed from Iloilo 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday.

"We were expecting it to dock here in Zamboanga City around 4 p.m. Thursday," Ho said.

Ho said they could only provide more details on the incident once the crew members reported because communications with the ship had been cut.

"That would be around 7 p.m.," he said.

Naval authorities said they were also having difficulty establishing contacts with the rescue teams.

Julie Alipala with reports from Troy Malcolm and Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau

URBAN WOES ARNOLDA LIMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

Floods brought by tropical depression Emong aggravate traffic jams in Iloilo City which has implemented a flood control project that some critics said was useless.

Batangas steel firm sues judge for alleged prejudice

CALAMBA CITY—A Batangas-based steel manufacturing company has filed at the Supreme Court an administrative case against a Makati regional trial court judge for allegedly prejudging a court case filed against the firm.

In a six-page complaint affidavit, lawyer Nonnatus Chua, counsel and assistant corporate secretary of Steel Corp. (Steelcorp), accused Judge Rommel Baybay of breaching several provisions of the Canons of Judicial Conduct regarding a court judge's fairness in handling cases.

The case was filed before the SC's Office of the Court Administrator last July 1.

The accusation stemmed from Baybay's supposed bias during the court hearing held June 29 where he purportedly showed acts favoring the Filipino Galvanizers Institute which filed the case against Steelcorp.

Chua said Baybay, the presiding judge of Makati regional trial court Branch 132, acted with "unusual haste and prejudgment of the case."

In his affidavit supporting Chua's claims, Antonio Lorenzana, executive vice president and chief operations officer of Steelcorp, attested to the supposed prejudice that Baybay displayed during the hearing.

In the said hearing, Lorenzana said Chua requested Baybay to record the entire proceedings so they could prepare for the cross-examination of the prosecution's witnesses.

He said Chua explained the need to do so because they have been having a hard time getting a copy of the transcript of stenographic notes as Baybay had denied their request.

Lorenzana said Baybay likewise failed to act on Chua's request to order the FGI counsel to give them copies of their witnesses' affidavits and documents.

He said when Chua asked for an extension in presenting all their witnesses, some of whom are government employees, and evidence on the next hearing on July 1, the judge simply turned down his request. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

AMYBODY HOME!
The tree goes on the barricade at an abortive demolition of Virgilio Garcillano's property after a decade in front of the prying eyes of visitors, especially journalists.

Native plants in danger of disappearing

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—The Cordillera's indigenous plants are being threatened by speculators and resource officials here and the government must pour in more resources to protect these and stop their possible extinction.

Dr. Ben Laddad, Cordillera director of the Department of Science and Technology and Benguet native reports about people who have secured the region's mountain ranges and forests to look for native plants that have medicinal values.

"We need to protect these indigenous plants because they might disappear and we might not have even used them to our benefit," Laddad told reporters here on Tuesday.

He said his office has yet to receive a formal complaint against people who have uprooted indigenous plants and who "have tried to smuggle them out of the region.

But he said there were reports about the clandestine efforts by some groups to study the potentials of different plants native to the Cordillera for development into medicine and pesticide.

"I am just afraid that some of these plants might have already been patented abroad and sold to us as medicines or pesticides," he said.

Laddad said he shared the sentiments of local researchers who felt hopeless in the wake of the government's inability to cope with the demands of research to protect the region's biodiversity.

He blamed the government's budget deficit as a reason that hindered our scientific projects aimed at developing the potentials of indigenous plants.

Laddad added that the DENR, Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to cooperate in preserving the destruction of the region's flora and fauna.

He said the absence of a comprehensive inventory of all plants endemic to the region could aggravate the lack of resources to protect these.

He said there is a need to identify all these plants and study their nature and growth patterns to determine the resources available to preserve their population.

Laddad welcomed the efforts of some Cordillera schools that have research programs on biology, agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry that will directly see the preservance of indigenous plants.

The DOST, he said, is not directly engaged in research on plants that have potentials to be developed into commercial medicines.

But he said the office enters into memoranda of agreement with academic institutions willing to conduct the research. Rebecca Cuntin, PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

Cops in list of suspects in radioman's killing

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police here are now up with a list of possible suspects in the killing of radioman Reynaldo Morales in Polomolok, South Cotabato on Saturday afternoon.

The list included some policemen assigned in Polomolok.

But Chief Insp. Danilo Mangila, Central Mindanao police director and head of the Task Force Morales, refused to identify them in the list.

Morales, who served as host of "Tinig sa Bukirin" program of Radyo Agong in Polomolok for more than a year, was killed by eight motorcycle-riding gunmen.

Mangila, however, said the Morales murder case was a very complicated one and police are still trying to look at various angles in determining the possible motive for the killing.

Morales, prior to his death, received death threats because of his controversies against illegal activities, including proliferation of illegal drugs.

Mangila sent policemen from the Regional Mobile Group to help restore normalcy in the town of Polomolok.

Mangila said he was alarmed by the deteriorating peace and order condition in the area, just lately the proliferation of illegal drugs and the series of unsolved killings. Aquiles Zosa Jr., PIA Mindanao Bureau

Palawan first to enforce beach monitoring system

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Palawan has just become the first province in the country to adopt a beach monitoring system to avoid the destruction that has ravaged other top tourist attractions.

A multi-sector team will start monitoring the cleanliness of all beaches in the province following the launching of the Beach Ecology Watch program in Barangay Sta. Lourdes in Puerto Princesa City recently.

Eyner Abito, media specialist of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSD), an environmental policy making body under the Office of the President, said the program shall set standards for all business establishments, including beach resorts and restaurants in the province, based on their impact on the environment.

He said that if Palawan will not take any action on the conditions of its beaches, the province "will be the next Cebu or Boracay."

The two are among the eight top tourist destinations in the Philippines, together with Siquijor.

However, many beaches in Cebu and Boracay have suffered from destructive activities.

In previous years, the waters of Boracay have been contaminated with coliform, a bacteria that can cause various diseases, due to improper solid waste management. Despite the influx of tourists due to eight successive prospects in the area, the government did not ensure the protection of the environment.

"We will not take the path they have taken," Abito said, because "we don't want that to happen to Palawan."

In an orientation workshop recently, representatives from the business sector, local government units, non-government organizations, and law operations agreed to implement the program in the municipalities.

Abito said the beach-ecowatch program has been launched in various parts of the world, but the Palawan project is the first in the Philippines.

A monitoring team shall conduct regular inspections and give citations for the best and worst establishments according to set criteria.

The award may be in the form of a flag or mural, which can be a maintaining tool for tenure, Abito said.

Standards will be based on provisions in the Clean Air Act, Water Code, Solid Waste Management Act, and other environmental standards. Jaybee Dacoria, PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

Army hunt for rebels scares villagers

SORTOC, Mt. Province—Villagers in Besao town said they were scared of their lives after government soldiers conducted a series of aerial bombings while they pursued New People's Army rebels.

Growing reality of bad-finding missions of various groups in the province, Gwen Longid, chair of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance Mt. Province, said soldiers from the army's 503rd and 502nd Brigades of the reconnaissance company of the 66th, 54th and 77th Infantry Battalion launched aerial bombings using bronco planes in Barangay Sandaweb in Besao.

Aside from the aerial bombings, the military also burned rice granaries and a cope hut in Barangay Sacasacan in Tadian, Abra and in Barangay Sambaan in Besao, Longid said.

Barangay Poloma-ong is along the boundary of Besao and Tadian.

Longid said the bombings of the village and the burning of the rice granaries happened at a time when the farmers were harvesting rice after the planting season six months ago.

Lt. Rodolfo Maglalang, commanding officer of the Charlie Company of the 54th IB, could not confirm the aerial bombings in Besao, saying the attacks were meant to subdue the communist rebels as part of their anti-insurgency measures.

Maglalang, however, said they have yet to verify reports if a rice granary was burned during the patrols operations. Desiree Cadano, PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

Pagsanjan seeks tourism boost with Fil-Am actress' arrival

PICO

PAGSANJAN, Laguna—This town's mayor volunteered to lead a group of artists in welcoming the arrival of Filipino-American actress Geraldine Pico (Geraldine Anne Cabangis Espiritu) and invited the actress to visit other towns considered as Laguna's tourism capital.

Emilio Ramos Ejercito, Pagsanjan mayor and vice president of the league (also) of City Philippines (LAMP), said his constituents were excited over the prospect of Pico visiting the town.

Pico broke into international fame by bagging a role in the hit American TV series "E.R."

Pillars she agrees to come to Pagsanjan, the mayor said, he would prepare a grand welcome for the Hollywood Filipina actress.

She would be met by the town's cultural presentations, a launch ride, tour of the Pagsanjan falls.

"In Pagsanjan, the visit of Geraldine here would hopefully boost our tourism industry here," said the mayor.

"Once the actress arrives, I would propose to the artists particularly (those) connected with the town to do their very best to welcome our Filipina star," Ejercito said.

Ejercito should Pico agree to do movies in the Philippines, Pagsanjan would be a good locale for a shooting to promote the town's various attractions, made by its waterfalls and rapids.

"Anything (endorsement will) do good to promoting Pagsanjan," said the mayor. Romualdo Peralta, PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

We know from experience that anything Shangri-La is excellent. That's why for our family residence in the Philippines, we chose The Shang Grand Tower.

– Mr & Mrs Robert Lee & Family
Ayala, Cebu

The Shang Grand Tower
[Luxury Residential Condominium]

Arrests show 'jueteng' in Calabarzon continues

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Just as the Calabarzon police insist that they have successfully stamped out the illegal numbers game in the region in the past two months, two jueteng collectors (bet collectors) were arrested in Pagbilao, Quezon on Wednesday.

The arrest was proof that the operations of the illegal numbers racket have not been suspended in some parts of Quezon, Laguna and Batangas as alleged by anti-jueteng crusader Archbishop Oscar Cruz.

A ranking intelligence police official earlier told the Inquirer that jueteng operations being maintained by Tonyo Ramos in Laguna, Stella Charing Magbuhos in Quezon and Cris Fernando Bautista in Batangas started "normal operations" almost two weeks ago.

In a report from the office of Supt. Ruelton Buenafe, public information chief, elements of the Anti-Illegal Gambling Special Operations Task Force, led by Insp. Cecilio Pinlac, arrested suspected bet collectors Manuel de Ramos, 46, and Josefina Apodillo, 43.

The report said the two were caught while in the act of arranging several pieces of lucky jueteng bet lists in Barangay Del Carmen at around 11:30 a.m.

Also confiscated from them were bail papers and bets amounting to only P90.

"When interviewed by the operating elements, (the arrested persons) refused to name their customers and further claimed that their operation is gone this size," the report said.

The suspects revealed they were taking draws in the province are being held "somewhere in Tayabas, Quezon."

Meanwhile, Chief Supt. Avelo Verosil, Calabarzon police director, ordered Senior Supt. Federico Teves, Laguna police director, to explain his failure to submit a certification from his office regarding his campaign against jueteng in the province as scheduled.

Verosil likewise asked Teves to submit a report about the alleged existence of jueteng in the towns of San Pedro, Nagcarlan, Lilio, San Pablo, Alaminos, Bay, Los Baños, Calauan and Magdalena.

Except for San Pedro, the said towns are located in the third and fourth districts of Laguna, the known strongholds of Chavez.

"Submit to this office ... your explanation as to why no disciplinary action must be taken against you for your failure to submit the (jueteng) certification on time in spite of the local media and (your own) to your office," Verosil said in his memorandum dated July 4.

He added: "Laguna is the only (province) police officer that failed to submit the requirements on time."

After yesterday's triple-threat operation, Verosil said he is optimistic that other violators will also be arrested soon.

"We have actually placed our men a while ago. The (bet) said the vendor will be known after his (each) draw," a driver told the Inquirer.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Roxas City port workers end strike

By Felipe Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—The 166 port workers at the Culasi Port here ended their strike after Roxas City Mayor Amando del Rosario promised to look into their problems.

The members of the Culasi Seaport Workers Labor Union (CSWLU) disputed their picket line at Culasi's pantalan at about 1 p.m., four days after they went on strike on Monday to press the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to fulfill an earlier agreement to release their benefits.

Del Rosario met with CSWLU legal counsel Eleanor Almadin Jr. and Harry Tolentino, PPA acting chief in Roxas, to discuss the problems of the port workers.

After the meeting, Tolentino announced he negotiate with the PPA so that benefits would be released. At the same time, the PPA also agreed to pay their salaries if they lifted the strike.

The strike had crippled operations at the port. Some shipping lines even warned that they would be compelled to use other ports to meet the provisions of the strike-stopper.

The labor union accused the PPA of failing to honor what they had agreed upon during a conciliation meeting on April 18.

These include timely payment of their salaries, the release of their salary differentials and restoration of Social Security System contributions at the agency's office in Roxas City instead of in Iloilo City.

The union said they had kept their part of the bargain, including the submission of a complete listing of its employees to the PPA.

It's a (horrible) dog's life for Manila's caged strays

By Tina G. Santos

MORBIDLY...

This was how members of the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) described the method being considered by the city government of Manila to get rid of stray dogs.

Just yesterday, more than a hundred dogs in the city pound were killed through electrocution.

Jorge Bocobo, a spokesman of PAWS who documented the procedure, said city pound personnel would pull a dog from a cage with a long steel pole with a rope at the end.

"A dog is dragged, almost suffocating, to the electrocution chamber," he said. "The dog is literally electrocuted between the metal cage and steel cord. Electricity is then released, passing through the cord and then transmitted to the dog."

The dead dogs are then put on a big weighing scale, one on top of the other. In batches of 10, their stomachs are slit while the semi-lifeless injects screams into them, he added.

"The dogs were really tortured badly. Not just about 100 to 500 volts of electricity per three seconds to the person," Bocobo said.

But according to Dr. Manuel Bocobo (of the city's Veterinary Inspection Bureau (VIB), the procedure was just part of an experiment to find a less expensive method than lethal injection, which some the city government about P250 per dog.

Dogs that were mostly sick, emaciated and afflicted with mange, and left unclaimed by their owners were usually put to sleep (chloroform injections), he said, adding that the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) had given them the go-signal to proceed with the study.

"The BAI gave us a year to conduct the experiment. We started about two months ago. We still have to submit the results to the BAI for deliberation," Bocobo said.

About 30 more dogs are scheduled to undergo the same method until next month.

Mayor Lito Atienza said he was not aware that there was such a study being conducted by the VIB.

However, he admitted that it was the city's policy "to put down [unclaimed dogs] to sleep."

"So if there are other civilized ways to do it, definitely use through electrocution. I will not allow it," he said.

Atienza added that he had asked Dr. Jose Dan, the city veterinarian, to explain the matter. An investigation could follow, if necessary, he said.

Meanwhile, PAWS officials said they intend to give a letter expressing their concern to city officials of Manila.

"Experiments are allowed, but animals should not suffer unnecessary pain," said Ramona Gonzalez, one of the directors of PAWS.

"It may be legal because it was allowed by the BAI, but it does not make it less cruel[ties], immoral and inhumane," she added. "Those barbaric practices simply are not allowed in civilized societies such as ours."

"Electrocution is the second most commonly used method that had been already banned to get rid of unclaimed dogs, next to poisoning. We're going our way backwards," said Anna Cabrera, another PAWS director.

Cabrera even cited the recent "Dog Meat Has a Cancer (Lam ka o Bantay)" campaign where thousands of dogs and their owners took to the streets to protest the senseless cruelty and indiscriminate slaughter of dogs.

"It's embarrassing. The city that launched a dog walk to right animal cruelty is now killing dogs," Cabrera added.

Parañaque treasurer flunks BIR lifestyle check

By Philabelle V. Barino

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance will file graft charges today against the City Treasurer of Parañaque City after an investigation revealed that he bought numerous properties and luxury vehicles, and had made trips abroad, expenses he couldn't have been able to afford based on his declared income.

The DOF said the filing of charges against Parañaque City Treasurer Liberato M. Carabeo in the Office of the Ombudsman means the official had failed a lifestyle check conducted by the firm, upon hiring by Protection Service Office. The PSO is tasked with investigating officials and employees of revenue collecting agencies suspected of being beyond their means.

According to the complaint affidavit obtained by the Inquirer, Carabeo earns a gross salary of P291,026 a year, or P24,251 a month. When he started out as a revenue collection clerk at the Parañaque City Treasurer's Office in 1981, he was earning a gross annual salary of only P8,400, or P700 a month.

Despite Carabeo's "meager" income, the PSO said he was able to buy two condominium units in Tagaytay City, a mansion in Cavite City, three lots in Lapu-lapu, seven luxury vehicles, and one share at the Odiong Country Club in Alabang, Muntinlupa City, currently priced at P745,000, and which could only be purchased in cash.

Carabeo's weak lifestyle was also highlighted by at least 15 unauthorized trips abroad from 1996 to 2004, according to the PSO.

Bus accident spares Fernando, other MMDA execs

By Edson C. Tatoy Jr.

A BUS carrying Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando and other top officials of the agency nearly fell into a ravine in Rodriguez, Rizal, yesterday. Nobody was seriously hurt.

The bus, an MMDA mobile office, climbed the sidewall several times before its two left wheels hung over the edge of the road at Mt. Balagbag in Rodriguez town.

Fernando, MMDA Vice Chair Cesar Lacerna, General Manager Robert Sarmiento, and 15 other MMDA officials were with Rodriguez Mayor Pedro Cuerpo on the tour of the area.

"They (MMDA officials) were in our town to look at a 19,000-hectare site in the town as a possible relocation site for 3,000 illegal settlers in Metro Manila," Cuerpo told the Inquirer.

To get to our review of the area, Cuerpo's group said they go up the town's highest mountain.

Fernando then decided that all officials should take the MMDA bus, while their cars followed.

But as they climbed up the mountain directly before beach resorts in the area, the bus' rear hit a road bank fallen on one side of the road.

He steered the bus to the other side. But recent rains had made the road wet and slippery. The bus skidded toward the edge of the road, Cuerpo was told.

Most of the officials were terrified as the bus got stuck, tilting on the edge of a precipice.

Lacerna and other officials jumped out of the bus through the windows, according to an MMDA statement.

Fernando and some officials remained in areas as they hurriedly exited the bus, the statement added.

"I thought because of what happened, Fernando would just cancel the trip," Cuerpo said.

But after everyone had safely gotten off the bus, Fernando told the MMDA officials to get in the van that had followed them.

Cuerpo said Fernando appeared unfazed with what he saw at the top of the mountain.

The bus was still being towed out of the mud as of press time.

MRT train operator not yet off the hook

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE OPERATOR of the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) train that killed a security guard early yesterday morning may still face prosecution, although the latter appeared to be unreckless.

The police said yesterday that Ramely Santiago, an MRT train operator for about two years, could be charged with reckless imprudence resulting in homicide.

Santiago drove the train that fatally hit security guard Rolando Ballesta at around 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday.

"It's automatic that there would be liability on the part of the operator," said PO2 Noel Pascua, case investigator.

But Pascua said yesterday the Makati Police Department (MPD) Criminal Investigation Division was waiting for the guard's family to coordinate if it wanted to file criminal charges against the train operator.

The investigator added that the family and the MRT administration could also decide to settle the matter amicably.

He said that Santiago, assigned to an MRT administration office, went to the MPD Homicide Office at around 9 p.m. on Wednesday to give his side on the incident.

Pascua said the operator denied seeing anybody on the tracks when the southbound train going toward the Buendia Station went past the Guadalupe Station, when in Ballesta was found dead with severed head and body parts.

Passengers said that at the approach to the Buendia Station, they felt the train coaches moving in a jerky manner, which could have been an indication that the train had hit something underneath.

Santiago reportedly hit the brakes before continuing the trip, turning around to the end-bound station then back again before resuming to the North Avenue depot.

The police concluded that Ballesta's death was an accident.

"There was no foul play because he was alone on the tracks. He [Ballesta] may have been retrieving or about to retrieve the accident recorded," said Pascua.

The guard reportedly worked on the 10 p.m.-6 a.m. shift. With Sheridan Sheang, trainee

Fire eats up commercial complex in Las Piñas

By Jocelyn R. Uy

WHAT started as a busy commercial complex in Las Piñas City became a deserted land of debris and burnt wood after it was razed by a fire early this morning yesterday.

The fire broke out at the Westbay Commercial Plaza along Coastal Junction, Zapote, Las Piñas City at 3:55 a.m. left nothing but the concrete walls of the complex. Deputy City Fire Chief Alfredo Salazar told the Inquirer.

The 1,000-sq. m. complex, owned by brothers Joe and Juan Gomez, housed 46 establishments, including a furniture shop, video management studio offices, boarhouses and night clubs, and fishnet.

A resident who worked in the market beside the complex fast reported the blaze to firemen, Salazar said.

Firetrucks were stationed at 4:1 a.m. after the fire was put out at 5:30 a.m.

Some shanties occupying a strip just behind the complex were also destroyed by the fire that displaced at least 17 families.

Fire investigators are eyeing arson as a probable cause of the blaze, based on accounts of witnesses, said Salazar.

Sally Sui Yee, Westbay treasurer said its owners had notified firemen about the fire to force down the commercial area.

The threats were made by a former worker of Westbay, Salazar said.

"We made an investigation on the threats twice last year," the fire marshal added.

However, he reiterated that fire investigators had yet to get statements from witnesses before they could establish the cause of the fire.

Although the cleanup season has begun, the public must still be on guard against such fires," said Salazar.

For their part, he said that firefighters continue to educate residents about tips in line with their fire prevention campaign.

Salazar also reminded the public to check their LPG tanks regularly for leaks.

About 60 percent of fire incidents had been caused by LPG tank leaks, he added.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

FRIDAY, JULY 8, 2005

SUERTRES 9 6 6
SIX DIGIT 6 3 4 5 4 2
2D 7 48
SUPERLOTTO 6/49 13 35 39 38 40 43
₱31,346,698.00

Ayala-Alabang businesswoman in tax raps

By Cynthia D. Baluss

AYALA-ALABANG businesswoman dealing in real estate was charged yesterday with tax evasion by the Bureau of Internal Revenue for failing to settle tax deficiencies amounting to ₱6.9 million in income taxes and ₱1.1 million in value-added tax payments for three years.

Mary Grace Poquiz joined the list of over 20 personalities charged by the BIR before the Department of Justice under its "Oplan Kandado" campaign, which started early this year.

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said Poquiz, who has a license to sell from the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board, failed to file income tax returns for 1999, 2003 and 2004 from highly profitable deals and businesses operations.

Parayno said the BIR was able to establish that Poquiz owned a 344.20-sq.m. commercial lot located along Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue in Makati City and had entered into a joint venture with Meridien High Rise Development Corp. to build the 39-story West of Ayala Condominium now fast progressing.

As part of the deal, Parayno said, Poquiz was given a signing bonus of ₱3.3 million by Meridien in 1999. She was also given 1,847.33 sq.m. of floor space in the condominium under the joint venture agreement with the developer.

Poquiz sold three condominium units at ₱9.4 million in 2003, and another six units at ₱29.7 million in 2004, in her individual capacity as real estate dealer.

Parayno said the BIR discovered Poquiz's tax deficiencies after it obtained copies of the transactions, including deeds of absolute sale, condominium certificate of title, and their corresponding certificates authorizing the registration.

The BIR found out that Poquiz's transactions involved sale of properties of expanded withholding taxes and documentary stamp taxes for the sale of the condominium units.

Parayno said that as an experienced real estate dealer, Poquiz should be aware that proceeds from the sale of condominium units would require the payment of "creditable taxes."

He said Poquiz was still required to file her income tax returns and whatever creditable taxes withheld, which could be deducted from her income tax dues.

Poquiz's non-filing of returns showed prima facie instances of fraud with intent to evade the payment of proper taxes, a violation of the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, Parayno added.

Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, in charge of Operations (OIF), said in the Department of Finance-BIR complaint that a person who is knowledgeable enough to understand the concept and complexities of joint venture agreements in the construction of an investment/office condominium and should not be allowed to feign ignorance of one's tax obligations.

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres

Manalo safely through; Luat falls

BASKETOFF WINS. Marlon Manalo in action.

Phone Pals out to pull even today

TNT import Gerald Honeycutt drives off QMB's Dorian Peña (center) and Danny Seigle in Game Two Wednesday

Jayvie in 3-way tie for Malaysia lead

Knights, surging Blazers shoot for fourth wins

THE LETRAN Knights aren't taking the win from Jose Rizal U Bombers lightly when they clash in the 81st NCAA season today at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"They showed big improvement after their opening game," said coach Louie Mar, who will try to extend the Knights' run to three wins at 4 p.m.

The St. Benilde Blazers will take take a success stand where they battle the struggling San Sebastian Stags at 2 p.m.

"It wasn't bangin' for a win is a very dangerous opponent," said Lyceum Pioneers coach Caloy Garcia, who has enjoyed last season's stellar shooters as an impressive 3-0 start.

While outdominating the Blazers' offense, Paolo Orbeta has been piling up points as well by averaging a team-high 14.3 markers per game.

Jay Gagul has been effectively patrolling the paint with 10 points and 11.3 rebounds.

"It's a very good start," Garcia noted after the Blazers mastered San Beda, 93-46, last Monday. "But I always remind my players that there is still a lot of work to do."

The Knights' own playmaker, Reyer Bautista, has been providing the leadership along with senior forward Aaron Mata.

Letran also got an outstanding offensive performance from sophomore JP Alonzo, who tossed in 21 points in the Knights' iconic 76-66 win over the Stags.

Last Sagesda, who garnered 11 points against the Knights, is expected to lead the Stags.

The Bombers have been struggling with their rookie-laden lineup, but forward Edsel Tala showed promise by scoring 16 points in their 80-62 loss to Mapua.

Jasmine B. Payo

Lady Archers bag V-League crown

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LA SALLE survived an epic third set duel around a fourth-set collapse to down University of Santo Tomas, 17-25, 25-22, 30-28, 25-20, last night and capture its second straight Shakey's V-League conference title before a capacity crowd at the Rizal Coliseum.

Powered by conference Best Attacker Michelle Carolino, the Lady Archers swept the best-of-three series into the Tigresses, who took the first set impressively down Ilaw Sun on point-opposite return to the dynamic third set.

"I said earlier that whoever wins the third set would win the match," said La Salle coach Rumel de Jesus, also the AV mentor of the Southeast Asian Games squad. "We pushed us hard in that set and gave it our best."

The Tigresses, who lost Game 1, also in four sets, pushed the Lady Archers to the wall at 19-23, 20-25, 27-26 and 28-27 in the third. But La Salle finally fought back once more through Carolino, Rhodilla Ituriaga and Universidad captain.

A service error by Mary Jean Balse-Ituriaga finally sealed the win.

"That third set could either went down or been a issue," said De Jesus, who also manned La Salle to the country's first championship in 2003.

LA SALLE'S conference MVP Maureen Penaranda spikes one in past Joyce Pano (4) and Mary Jean Balse (5) of UST in yesterday's match. EDDIE AT

That's exactly what happened in the fourth set as the Lady Archers played with renewed vigor while the Tigresses seemingly plotted on.

"We are familiar with the way UST plays and thus spelled the difference in

Bata and Django: Who's better or worse

BOXING sawy with Django Bautista-Spring battle struggle in the qualifying round of the World Flyer Championship in Kuching on Tuesday finally is to the all-important knockout round, after all.

But when Django, once ranked the world's No. 1, humbled and was knocked out right in the opener of the Final 16, the championship was spent.

Django's shocking fall was expected losing a entire momentary. But what happened to Dwayne Wade, at the height of the NBA conference finals.

The 2005 World Not series had lost one of its shining stars very very early.

Bata, whereas, Django is scheduled to come into contact with Dolfino and disbelief.

Local fellow fans, who the day before entertained the visit of Efren "Bata" Reyes to the qualifying phase, were not ready for the tragedy.

* * *

Could you believe that? Emcee Nick Rolling, ESPN's Mark-derived tournament host.

Harder to comprehend, of course, was how Django would've missed a short, easy shot at the yellow 9-ball in the seventh frame, a fault that ultimately tilted the match in favor of the unheralded Chang Jung-Ting of Taiwan.

Chang, a 20-year-old World Pool chiropractic who appeared like a son, intimidated Bata, much compared to Django who looked like a turned derby champ, took on that Pinoy voice and soared to an 8-3 lead in the race to 10. Before that, the bouley Taiwanese was behind, 1-5, all but given up for dead.

There was a bigger tragedy in Django's game.

A number of slips and flaws, both in perfecting and defensive placement, would turn that the horrendous miss on that short, easy shot at the 9-ball was anything but accidental.

Django's fall against the unheralded 20-year youngster has found a deep detention-line in his overall game.

* * *

Of course, Django cannot be expected to admit he's developed bee-eye disease when he missed exposing the 9-ball. It was (after a simple scratch) against Lai Hsin-Chieh in the

BARE EYE

Abcede Trinidad

2002 Finalist Cardiff.

Did the sorry signs are all there, and Django has the symptoms of the years to contend with.

Bata Reyes, the Magician? He's not the type to deny that he's already over the hill.

"Nasasa-matandaan ko ay lang umyaabi ng pagtanda. I already had the years in my pagsasa[illegible]," Reyes, 51, told Nickel Iron of the Manila Bulletin.

Short of seeing the magic is gone, Bata seems to glad to send his finals a worthy host.

("Gusto ko may magmana ng talento ni Efren, para kapag wala kayong mamalo, dinon't pa rin mawawala.")

* * *

Waiting for a new magician. The rumor mills that would inherit Bata's crown may not be among the Pinoy contenders who had answered entries in the Final 32.

But the prayer is for someone in the able group of Dion Nagalarian, Marlon Manalo, Gandy Ilalin, to go all the way to the finals to keep the Philippine flag flying high in Kuchingtong.

There's a must, after Bata Reyes crossed a nationwide pool fever with his world title triumph in Cardiff 1999.

You see, unlike in boxing, it's not openly accounted but the Pinoy has taken great pride in the gift and presence of his international stars. The reason we've had others over Bata, Django & Co. got humbled during major foreign soirees.

Like the case of Roger O., nationalist writes from Imus, Cavite, who failed in Efren Django's horrendous missed shot in a various[illegible]

"Hindi si Efren Reyes ang [illegible] noon nun. Iyan [illegible] ang [illegible] Efren the Slot Gentleman could've not missed that easy shot," he groaned.

One guess analyst, a feared pool practitioner in his area in Baguio, added that the fact efforts in cable has always been known for superb pocketing ability.

He refused to elaborate.

group of cinemas movie guide
shoemall
1 Kalapati sa Gabi
4 Fantastic 4
5 War of the Worlds
Shoemall
1 Kalapati sa Gabi
2 Creep
3 Under Renovation
4 Under Renovation
5 Fantastic 4
6 War of the Worlds
shoemall
1 War of the Worlds
2 Normal Reservation

60 lifts up in Pasay derby

SIXTY lifts over the ten a special 4 mark derby tonight at the Pasay City Cockpit with Sagupaan Cockpiece 2000. Sagupaan 8 will raise and Sagupaan Mix forecast tomorrow. Entry fee is pegged at P4,000 unless cash prize is make a P100,000, according to Sandy Morel and Chief Executive. The list of matchups include Fernie Antenar, Jose Ilocano, Guy-de Boss, Pio Gonzalez, Boy Pasay, Brandy Valentino, Lito Roque, Ramon Manamanit, Jun Fe Ignacio, Jun Ignacio, Rudy Galut, Lito Dela Syla, William Cal, Al Sill Group and Dio Manamanit. For matchups, call 8424000, 8425146 and 8746168.

Hataw an 3rd round today

THE 3-BIG round of elimination in the National Do Sagi Mardi Gras Derby at Filipino Mega Cockpit empire at 3 p.m. today with 72 matches on schedule. Last Wednesday, 53 mardi-ed-in-cocked fan entry each and qualified for the championship round on July 10, dressing them once the series of Teddy Mendiolaya, the Don Santiago Divine, Boy de los Reyes, Arman Garcia and CP Quiaro. Meanwhile, only participants with half cock and 1.5 points can join the mardi-4-cock scuffle on Monday, that Perla Lopez pair. Preliminary is slated to be dig. dumpsite on Monday, Nov. For inquiries, call 8547357 to 8220000 or 8420852.

NOW SHOWING!
PERSONS WITH WEAK HEARTS ARE ADVISED NOT TO SEE THIS FILM ALONE
FRANCIS FORDE
TWICE THE HORROR OF JEEPERS CREEPERS!
CREEP

Lina intent on rebuilding BAP's image

By Francis Delos

JOEY Lina could have easily come out brandishing five iron clubs after the Philippine Olympic Committee blasted the basketball Association of the Philippines for the rogue team the country has gotten into.

Instead, the BAP chief spoke of unity and of "marching closer to work" immediately.

Lina yesterday unveiled a grand plan of restructuring and reorganizing the BAP in a move to mend the fractured basketball scene and convince the international basketball federation (Fiba) to lift the country's suspension from international competitions.

The most ideal scenario is that, given leaders put up a united front, both amid personal and organizational differences, [illegible] each other for whatever unrelated issues the freshman basketball Association championships.

Although Lina refused to reveal the specifics of a plan he intends to present to the POC in a meeting scheduled "very soon," he gave a general description of his goal, which represents the boldest move ever by the BAP to unseat forces with major basketball stakes holders in the country.

The Inquirer learned that several letters in the BAP and NCAA to discuss a possible unification. Lina also plans to talk to the Philippine Basketball Association to present to the current membership an agreement that will be known the professional league and the BAP.

He has also sounded off the current BAP officers and members about the need to revamp the group's constitution.

Most importantly Lina said he would no longer argue the group's "case with the Fiba. He will no longer argue nor cave in here the court of arbitration of sports. And certainly, we will no longer [go through] prolonged exchanges in the media."

"From if we are beaten black and blue, the nationals are will adopt is not to fight back and prove that we are right," said Lina. "Instead, let the sake of basketball, and unity in sports, we'll do everything possible to resolve the present [illegible] so as to soon as possible with the POC leadership."

Lina's proactive stance was puts the ball in the POC court.

The POC slam blasted the BAP by the suspension slapped by the Fiba on the country, which effectively bars any Philippine parties [illegible] international competitions.

Lina said the suspension is extremely unfair, especially [illegible] that he has still to receive word from the section of recommendations he filed regarding the BAP's expulsion from the POC.

LINA: All for unity

Distraught Seaba five comes home hungry

By Mucong R. Castillo

A PHILIPPINE team burned from defending its Southeast Asian title came home from Malaysia yesterday, heads bowed and badly crushed from an experience its coach described as "the saddest in my life."

Its fans, coach Jasper Zamar and the Nationals had to encourage for hands just to make it back to Manila.

"We did not go there to fight for a cause," Zamar told the Inquirer. "We went there to play for Pinoy and country, that's all," he added. "The players were innocent victims in the crossfire. They should have spared the players."

The 12-man team sent by the expelled Basketball Association of the Philippines to defend the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (Seaba) crown in Kuala Lumpur was barred from playing as the 13th host.

The ban was imposed by the international federation (Fiba) following the expulsion of the BAP by the Philippine Olympic Committee, which the Fiba referred to arrogance pending its own investigation.

With 10 out of the tournament, the IO, organizers withdrew all the privileges of the team like housing and food.

"They were like headless chickens there, wandering the streets to kill the time and fight hunger," said Zamar.

ZAMAR: Our players were like headless chickens.

"The accreditation (as a team) gave us three meals a day. In between, [illegible] pinoys na kinuha namin sa dining area lang ang kinakain namin. (They had to survive on fruits they got from the dining area)."

Zamar said that the players went to Kuala Lumpur without pocket money and all. The team has been without financial support since Cy Imperial Hotshot were forced to withdraw more than three months ago.

"Those players go to practices on their own. While relying masasabing [illegible] ng gasgasuline nila para sa bayan natin (They were not expecting anything in return)," Zamar said.

A small [illegible] aboard a rented one during opening day last Tuesday when their competition failed to play, according to Jerry Codilla, an all-time Philippine Basketball Association great who went with the team as an assistant to Zamar.

The team was actually scheduled to fly at least two days earlier, according to Manila was an after the tournament.

The POC could have saved the Seaba stint and thus pave the way for the country's entry in the Fiba-Asia men's championship in September, but the local Olympic body refused to grant the team a special permit that the Fiba-Asia had requested.

"It was the saddest experience of my life," Zamar said. "Worse, we don't know what's on store and what's going to happen to Philippine basketball [after this]."

EALA: Hopeful

Eala: It's business as usual

Al INK as the Philippine Basketball Association is concerned, it's business as usual for the national court running in Scheidpark.

A stack-team rebuild from the pool recently handled by national coach Chot Reyes, is set to depart soon week for the Global Asops Las Vegas summer league, hopeful that the suspension slapped on the country by the international basketball federation (Fiba) will be lifted soon.

"We are proceeding with our training under the mind-set that the suspension will be lifted," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala, who had earlier sent a letter to the Fiba to allow the BAP-formed Philippine team to compete in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (Seaba) tournament in Malaysia.

The Seaba is a qualifying tournament for the ABC Championships in Indianapolis, which in turn is the qualifier for the World Championships next year. The three events mean part of the schedule of the Phil basketball national pool.

"We are saddened by the suspension, but it is business as usual for us," said Eala.

Asa Miguel Beer, the chief bankroller of the training pool, has reaffirmed its commitment to the squad.

The Las Vegas league will include the national teams of Cuba, Korea and Qatar and NBA hotshots whose rosters will be filled with aspirants, rookies and free agents. (Manuel Salvo)

Laguna Spring cagers battle Baguio today

BIÑAN CITY – Spring Cooking-backed Laguna tries to get back on the winning track today when it faces collar-dweller Baguio in the 2001 Buenamix-NBC national basketball championship at the University of Baguio gym here.

The Laguna Spring Cookers' NBC president Tar Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro are favored over the Nina Antonio-Buenamix-backed Lions to do it a.m. game.

Bridel Bernal, Sonny Manuzon and Mar Reyes are expected to carry the load for Spring, which is coming off a long layoff after narrowly losing to Cebuanogue and Steward Tugaig to two all-in-but-three games.

Other Laguna reliables are playmaker Sherlon Kalaw, Rudel Bañkal and Ed Domingo.

"We're all set to go up to the standings," said Laguna coach Vic "Bambo" Sanchez.

The Lions of Nina Manot Bermido-Buenamix in the three hopes on Joel Rosas, Edston Fernandez, Jeffrey Yee, Uber Cleon and Leo Isidoro.

"They [Laguna coach] has some trouble, so we'll try to outrun them," said Baguio coach Napoleon "Nap" Garcia.

Is James Yap enjoying 'undue' advantage?

CLEAN LIVING
Alamedo
R. Delejos

THERE is no question that the Philippine Basketball Association is worthy of praise for honoring the league's most outstanding players of the year, but in the spirit of fairness and equality it should review its formula allowing the players of four ballclubs—San Miguel Beer, Coca-Cola, Barangay Ginebra and Purefoods—to vote separately in the fourth race to select the PBA Most Valuable Player, Rookie of the Year and Best Import.

For example, in this year's Rookie draft, James Yap of Purefoods is perceived as enjoying an advantage over Bob Abante of Shell in players' vote because the TJ Hotdogs sweepstakes is expected to get the voice from players of Purefoods' sister team.

In my view, this setup, where one company controls two teams in the PBA, is not good for the league.

"It's looking unacceptable," former PBA chief and Alaska team owner Wilfred Uytengsu once told following the transfer of the Coca-Cola franchise from the Ginebra-Cola team) to San Miguel Corp., raising the number of PBA teams owned by SMC to four.

As a result, this one-sided set-up has generated many criticisms. Worry was the league's integrity could be cast under a big cloud of doubt and the fans' confidence could be crushed.

I'm not privy to the selection format, but it is to the best interest of the organization of the PBA to purchase limit the votes of the four same teams to future consideration. This will at least level the playing field and make everybody happy.

In the current BOY derby, the 6-foot-3 shooter is not only leading in the statistical race but his overall record is better than those of the other contenders such as Yap, Joachim Thone (Alaska), Big-O Purefoods' teammate Fred Arnold, and Randolf de Ocampo (FedEx).

In all-around player and runner, time BAP Most Valuable Player, Alvin Patrimonio of Shell in 1990 and 1991 and Purefoods' Jerry Codinera in 1992 and 1993 were not only leading in their respective teams in scoring but also in rebounding.

Patrimonio, a former Ateneo Blue Eagle, was simply dominant in the 2000 Philippine Cup, 2000 Governors' Cup and the ongoing 2001 Finals Conference, where the Turbo Chargers lose the TJ Hotdogs in a "best-of-three series for a spot in the semifinals.

SERIOUSLY SEEKING. Of course, the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) suspension of the Philippines was a big blow to everybody. But more than that, it is the players who will suffer the most. Fiba has taken away half of the golden opportunity to play the flag and country in international competitions.

The suspension, spawned by the controversy between the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Basketball Association of the Philippines, would not have been imposed on the Philippines had POC representative to the Philippines Frank Elizalde only made the case to mediate at the first signs of trouble.

But Elizalde, who spends much time traveling abroad to attend IOC meetings, did not make his presence felt during the ongoing dispute even though it involved members of the Olympic family.

Being the eyes and ears of the IOC in the Philippines, Elizalde could have prodded the rancorous leaders to sit down and work out a [illegible] sports officials, most of whom, by the way, are public [illegible].

At any rate, what is important now is for the feuding groups to [illegible] and for Fiba to grant the way for the country's reinstatement in the Fiba. We can't waste much time by finger pointing and blaming each other.

Armstrong bares charitable side

LANCE Armstrong sets out to be cyclist in the fifth stage.

MONTARGIS, France—Lance Armstrong could afford to show his charitable side after the fifth stage of the Tour de France here wednesday as he shook hands with Stefan Matheus Bardy got to show his sprinting prowess ahead of Belgian ace Tom Steenen.

However the 29-year old Texan, who led the Discovery Channel team to a rather lucky victory in the team time trial on Tuesday will be sure pushed to be as calm when the race goes over some stony terrain this weekend.

Armstrong's team handed him the yellow jersey only after a dramatic finish involving the CSC team's time trial specialist David Cañedo on Sunday.

The 28-year-old man wearing the yellow jersey in the time, and would top losing it by two seconds after he rode laterally over the finish line dripping blood from various cuts on his body.

On Wednesday Armstrong gave his lead rider in the race lead, but the Americans—who seems to prioritize either loss or burned in the peloton—appeared in the final line not wearing it, apparently in a bid to save homage to Cañedo.

The sporting gesture has been made before on the race, the last time being when an Australian, Greg Lemond, refused to wear the yellow jersey in 1991 after Denmark's Rolf Sorensen mauled 16 kilometers from the finish line to win the fifth stage.

On that occasion and despite Lemond having secured in the general classification, race organizers allowed the American his request not to wear the jersey as a mark of respect for Sorensen, who had to abandon the race. AFP

Enduro Light Adventures final call

PINOYMAN CYCLING CLASSIC. Champion Robert Villaber of Talisay, Cebu, with second placer Cosme Kennedy of Danao City and third placer Delfin of Cebu City after riding the third lap. Mike Reyes Mindanao Cycling Classic over the weekend. Oroquieta Mayor Reynaldo Pandiyong (second from left) poses with the winners along with race director Franklin Gonzalez, Bapos, PhilCycling's Pepe Olivarez and vice president for Mindanao Jojo Villa.

THE ENDURO Sun Mig Light Adventure in 2001, which flags off on July 16 in Baguio City, is second, rig off to last call for interested participants.

There will be briefing at the Ayala Restaurant at 200 Gen Baguio, from 9 a.m. to noon for the Novice Category seeders, and from 1:3 p.m. for the Elite Category seeders, to determine whether they have the strength for the rigid and daunting task awaiting them.

During the briefing, the exact equipment and rules to be checked to help ensure the safety of the participants.

All the teams, each composed of three persons one of whom should be male or female—will come from a designated point in the City Baguio and will go through all stations, some by sequence and others by a non-sequence selection, and must arrive at the finish line before the cut-off period.

A total of 45 elite and novice teams will test their skills and stamina as they go through different challenges in the demanding terrain of Baguio.

Interested participants have until this week to register, for inquiries, call the Enduro hotline at (63) 4141460 or visit www.sun-mig.ph.com.ph for details.

The winning team in the Elite Category will take home P25,000.

The Novice Category champion team will get a cash prize of P10,000.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
Festival Cinemas
EASTWOOD CINEMAS
Cinema 2000 Valkorner Mall
Blue Wave
Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
SUPER CINEMAS
Cinema 2000 Cinemagic
Cinema 2000 Alabang
Cinema 2000 Mallcinema
stармall Marikina
Jaks Cinema
Lianga Cinema
Lianga MetroCity
METROPOLIS
Cine Mega
Fred's World Mall
stармall Mall of Asia
Bohol Cinema
Cebu Plaza Cinema

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Milo CdO race fires off Sunday

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—More than 11,000 runners from this city and from Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental and Camiguin are expected to crowd the starting area of the 29th Milo Marathon Region 10 fun run in Misamis Oriental's capital city on Sunday.

Jerriel Cariquido and Aileen Estremos, who are seeking their third straight regional crowns this year, are expected to vie for the six slots—three for men and three for women—in the national finals slated Oct. 9 in Metro Manila.

Cariquido is expected to get a tough challenge from Nagat Ibrahim by whom he had barely defeated here last year. Senets-ay fell just 20 seconds short in overthrowing Cariquido in last year's 21.1 race. Tolentino is likewise expected to be challenged by sister Eliza, however, the latter by a mere eight seconds here two years ago.

The other runners to watch on Sunday are Jaime Castillo and Basilio Sandinas in the men's and Nenel Tapia and Helen Tacling in the distaff side.

The annual fun race is held in partnership with Bayview Park Hotel, schools, Cebu Pacific, Smart Gilas Pilipinas of Tim Cone, Addidas Mobile Prepaid and Dewarbar.

Mission Orientalis Gen. Oscar S. Rimando will fire the starting gun to set off the runners from Velez Street, which will be closed to give way to the marathon.

Also expected to grace the occasion are Jonas L. Taborito, regional director of the education department in Region 10, Trina Abola, North Pole, regional sales manager, Pat Gee Ong, Milo sports events executive and marathon organizer Rudy Biscocho.

The top finishers in the 21.1 race will bring home a trophy and a P150,000 cash purse each.

Ironcta Leisure Guide
MENAGE SALON
NOW OPEN
at Level 3, Gateway Mall

CINEMA SCHEDULES
FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETMFT AT 911-5555
MR & MRS SMITH
WAR OF THE WORLDS
MONSTER IN LAW
FANTASTIC FOUR
BATMAN BEGINS
CREEP
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
FANTASTIC FOUR
ALI MALL CINEMAS
FANTASTIC FOUR
WAR OF THE WORLDS
BATMAN BEGINS
KULAPATI SA GUBI
CREEP
ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
NEW STORES
PERFORMANCES
EXHIBIT
SPECIAL APPEARANCE

La Salle captures V-League crown

From page A12

dalcontes," said Dr. Jr. Fil.

In the end, La Salle easily handled UST's crucials anchored on Rizzini Diomal, Joyce Dimaa, Baker and Vivian Bernal with ease.

On the other hand, UST had trouble all day containing Candace Bautista and Cristine Mc Mourren. Pennsylvania, who kept firing from all sides of the court through the massive blues cap by Pachecilla. The shorty Queen Bringit took home the league's first Series award.

Earlier, Socialtus summed their plans with a 17-25, 25-23, 25-23, 25-20 win over Ateneo. Cherry Rose Macaraeg scored 20 points for the Lady Eagle and took honors the their Series plans.

Cherries scored all of her 17 points on kills, including a break the deciding set that gave Ateneo a 2-1 lead. Ateneo's Michelle Lahoste (Best Server), Hilda (Best Setter), Phillis Cornelius (Rookie of the Year) and Lucille's Hermione Miller Pesano (Best Scorer).

PG-13 THIS SEMESTER, SOME ANGRY SOULS ARE ALSO ENROLLED...PAPASOK KA BA SA HAUNTED SCHOOL?
FROM THE MAKERS OF "THE JUNG" COMES A NEW HORROR PHENOMENON
Psychic horror happens in the most unlikely place... the school. Students take note!
CAMPUS GHOST STORIES
MAGPAPARAMDAM SILA SA HULYO 13!

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

Editor: Raul D. Pangalangan
Assistant Editor: Carrie S. Martinez

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

Shares rise 1.39% on bargain hunting

Another pre-need firm files for rehabilitation

By Elizabeth L. Saavedra

PLASTICOM Plans Philippines Inc. early this week sought refuge from a regional trial court to undergo rehabilitation and suspend payments of its various obligations.

Branch 61 of the Makati Regional Trial Court yesterday allowed the troubled pre-need firm to temporarily stop payments to its plan holders and creditors.

Plasticom Plans has over 37,000 plan holders under its care. The pre-need firm is the second pre-need firm to request a court intervention this year.

The Yabut family headed by former Sandiganbayan Justice Gaby, controlling majority stake in Plasticom, is trying to sell land value and open-ended education plans was suspended this year when the company ran into liquidity problems.

Plasticom has a total fund deficit of more than P1.06 billion.

In its petition, Plasticom asked the court to suspend all claims that would be filed against the pre-need firm and its guarantors. It said it would only

/A4

WHAT'S INSIDE

Bank reserve requirement raised /B4

/B3

RP still on right fiscal track, says Bear, Stearns

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE CONCERN that the Philippines is on the verge of a fiscal crisis, following the suspension of the expanded value-added tax law, may prove to be an exaggeration, according to United States investment bank Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc.

The US investment bank noted that with or without the e-VAT law, the Philippines is still on track and on its way to fiscal recovery.

"The important thing to keep in mind is that the fiscal situation in the Philippines is improving, although at a slower pace without the VAT law," the bank said in its latest analysis on the Philippine economy. "In our view, the Philippines is not getting worse."

In substantiating its claim, Bear, Stearns cited the announcement of National Treasurer Omar Cruz that the national government would likely post another one-month budget surplus in June.

The government recorded a one-month surplus in April—the first time in three years.

The Department of Finance (DOF) earlier said it expects the national government's budget position for June and for the first half of the year.

The bank, quoting the country's economic team, said the Philippine government likely posted a budget deficit in the first half that is P20 billion lower than its target. The reason that should the government meet its target for the second half, its budget deficit for the whole year might only reach P150 billion, or P50 billion lower than the full-year target.

The 2005 budget deficit target was set at P180 billion for the P.H. year, and P98.3 billion for the first half.

But Bear, Stearns said that with the e-VAT law, the Philippine government would be able to avoid, erase the imminence of its medium-term goal of wiping out its budget deficit.

The e-VAT law was reinstated to generate as much as P11 billion in incremental revenue in the second half of the year, and P105 billion annually starting next year.

The e-VAT law considered to be the Arroyo administration's key measure to resolve the fiscal problem, is supposed to expand the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity, among others. The law will also give the President a standby authority to raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent next year.

The US bank said that the temporary restraining order issued on the VAT would even benefit embattled President Macapagal-Arroyo because it would prevent inflation from rising further.

Critics of the administration were blaming the government's tax reform measures for the current increase in consumer prices.

"Full implementation of the VAT law on July 1 would likely have pushed the inflation rate back above 8 percent, and maybe even 9 or 10 percent," the bank said. "This would have been very bad for President Arroyo—from a political point of view—at this time."

Bear, Stearns, however, said there are risks that would follow the Supreme Court's suspension of the VAT law. For one, there is the danger that the suspension of the e-VAT law may not be lifted, and that the law may be declared null and void.

Another pre-need firm files for rehabilitation

Continued from B1

set the up to P75 million of its maturing obligations to plan holders.

It has also asked the court to appoint a rehabilitation receiver.

As part of its rehabilitation plan, Platinum said it would not sell, transfer or dispose in any way any of its properties except as requested or incurred in the course of its business.

Platinum said that, despite the meltdown in the pre-need industry, it firmly believes it should be allowed to undergo rehabilitation that said implementing a recovery plan to protect the interests of its stockholders, creditors and plan holders.

It added that the "realizable value of its existing assets can provide a mode of settling all claims of its plan holders which are not yet due at the moment."

It proposed a rehabilitation plan that would receive eight years.

In a statement, Platinum acknowledges that the filing of its petition to suspend payment to its plan holders and creditors would have a grave impact specially on those whose plans were approaching maturity.

Platinum hopes that the court will allow it to sell its assets so that it can raise enough funds to settle maturing plans.

Platinum began selling education plans in 1981. At that time, it was known as the Children's Investment for Lifetime Development Corp.

In 1995, the firm changed its name to Platinum Plans. It stopped selling traditional open-ended education plans in 1993, and shifted to fixed value education plans.

From the time it was organized, Platinum said its revenues had been on the upswing. Revenues soared to P631 million in 2003 from P28 million in 1999. At about this time, it expanded its distribution network to 113 branches.

In 1999, several trustee officers were found to have initiated fraudulent deals by cashing it appear that the plans were fully paid when they were not. The delinquents/officers were dismissed.

Platinum said that in 2004, revenues plunged to P363 million as confidence in the industry was affected by the financial problems of pre-need giants like College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc.

Platinum said that while it has more than sufficient assets to cover for all its liabilities, it may not be able to pay for plans as they mature.

Like other pre-need firms that sold open-ended plans, Platinum was adversely affected by spiraling tuition rates.

In April, Asiacic Plans Inc. of the Yuchengco family filed for its rehabilitation with a blanket court. PPI said that it would not be able to pay future claims because interest rates had been increasing at a tremendous rate ever since the government removed the 12-percent cap on rates from it in 1990.

SCHOOLTEACHERS take lessons on basic Web at Convergys trainer

Call center talks people into speaking English

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

CONVERGYS Corp., the world's largest call center firm operating out of the United States, is looking to the Philippines for the continued growth of its business.

Convergys has six contact centers in Metro Manila and one in Cebu, employing 5,600 Filipinos.

And it's just getting started.

The call center operators, however, is finding it increasingly difficult to find Filipinos fluent enough in English communication to meet its global standards.

Industry figures show that only four out of 100 who apply for a job in a call center pass the oral communication exams. This belies the Filipinos' reputation for being natural English speakers.

Convergys, thus, realized that if it does not do anything to reverse the trend, it will not be able to meet the global demand for call center agents. And it will miss the rare opportunity to generate employment to thousands of Filipinos.

Bright spot

The call center industry is one of the few bright spots in the troubled economy.

The Philippines ended 2004 with 75 contact centers, from just 20 in 2003. Total investment was pegged at $136 million for last year alone.

The industry aims to employ 46,000 by the end of the year and up to 300,000 by 2009. Call center seats are just there for the taking.

"The biggest challenge we face is ensuring a pool of competent graduates who can meet global standards," said Marife Zamora, country general manager of Convergys Philippines, in a presentation during the recently-concluded Corporate Social Responsibility Expo 2004.

To face the challenge, Convergys embarked on an Oral Communication Skills Training for Secondary Public School Teachers in June last year.

Convergys believes that to preserve the pool of talent so vital to its operations, efforts to improve English proficiency must start with the teachers tasked to hone the English skills of their students.

"We know that the quality of our graduates depends more than anything on the quality of teachers. Our model then is to first study some of developments," she said. "Training teachers would create a ripple effect and bring about the greatest impact."

Convergys, thus, teamed up with the Department of Education to start the training program, particularly the DepEd's Mentorship Program.

Mentor teachers

DepEd provided the network of mentor-teachers, while Convergys provided the training module on the art of English communication.

Training for mentor-teachers in Luzon started on June 24 and was held at the Convergys training facility in Makati. Training for Visayas and Mindanao, on the other hand, was held in Convergys Cebu.

Over 200 participated in the program.

The participants were provided the same facilities, equipment and software that Convergys' call center representatives use during the communication and culture training.

They got their training for free and were provided with training materials they can use with their students and fellow teachers when they go back to school.

Zamora said the facilitators were top quality. Convergys trainers who volunteered to give up their weekends to conduct the teacher training for free.

These facilitators bring with them their experience in training over 5,000 technical and customer care representatives in providing service to American customers, and this was shared with the mentor-teachers.

Teachers learned about accent neutralization, intonations, pronunciation, practical grammar, assertiveness and thought organization.

Series of firsts

"For many of the mentor teachers, the training was a series of firsts," Zamora said. "For some, it was their first exposure to training in an electronic environment. Others heard their own speech for the first time, and realized the need to practice fluency in English communication."

Convergys is hopeful that with more teachers undergoing the training, it can contribute to the improvement of English proficiency among the young.

Convergys followed up the successful partnership with DepEd with similar arrangements with the Sa Ikkay Foundation and the Philippine Business for Social Progress, which share similar development goals.

"In the end, while we recognize that this undertaking will contribute to the continued success of our industry we also extend it as an opportunity to actualize the Convergys core values of integrity, teamwork and corporate citizenship," Zamora said.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Junior taipans show GMA clout

PRESIDENT Arroyo found herself in cultural kingdom Tuesday night, dining with sons and daughters of tycoons who kept their pro-Ong, pro-Erap, pro-PDI sentiments to check on joy their property in the country's beleaguered Chief Executive.

The occasion was the induction of the officers of the Anvil Club, the junior version of the Rotarian-based Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, led by swashbuckler George Ty and columnist Wilson Lee Flores, CNN's student in Manila.

Despite the short notice, the hotel Ballroom was able to round up a respectable number of guests, including Singapore Ambassador Lee Khoong Hou, Manila Mayor Lito Atienso, Rep. Arlo Lagos and Miles Rivera, Presidential Assistant Jerry Concepcion La La Kalibo who was registering to his seat over the anti-GMA La Salle adv't, Ambassador Amy Remmis and Harvard-based IMF president Joel Cuello.

The President herself hardly gave any hint of personal turmoil as she avoided the cameras, shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries. Dinner itself was exceedingly quick and devoid of speeches and cultural shows.

The President arrived at 7 p.m., and by 8 p.m. she was gone. According to after-dinner accounts, economics, not the political storm, dominated the presidential table talk.

Despite the Presidente leaving left, the Anvil Club lingered on for another hour, pumping Executive Queen Peter Cayetano, who had stepped inside the Palace during the martial-rule '80s, to enlight how related the atmosphere was, compared to the Marcos years.

We will stop here, before we stray into politics, hotel wiretaps and still Rap-Brothers.

Lies, damned lies and EPCIB statistics

EQUITABLE PCIBank said the Monetary Board was wrong to order its investment bank subsidiary to reduce the current market pricing of its shareholdings, representing 30 percent of Equitable PCIBank shares. Despite having built their value since their 1999 acquisition.

The bank also claimed the new Monetary Board order to sell the 30-percent block, which

COCKTALES ON

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aguinto

INSTANT NOODLE PLANT AUCTION! Tons & Tons of Metal!

up to 6 over 95 % off!

Call # 638-3333, 638-3388 NOW!

AMERICAN AUCTION!
tel: 0027-555-0000

INVESTMENT FUNDS	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
Investment Funds of **Wealth Builder**	July 6, 2000	June 27, 2000
Fixed Income Fund	1.035861	1.034139
Balanced Fund	1.053019	1.051376
Equity Fund	0.910968	1.063477

These investment funds are not insured by the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) or any other government agency. They are not deposits or obligations of, or guaranteed by, the investment manager (UnionBank Investment Management Corporation) or any of its affiliates.

The results and prices are also available at www.unionbank.com.ph

PESO NEARS ALL-TIME LOW

Bank reserve requirement raised

Think You know everything there is to know about Your Customers?

NOT After You Attend This... ...You Won't!

Learn to create and connect to maximize profits...

HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL, MAKATI CITY
AUG. 18 & 19, 2005

Register early and get a Shopping 21% Discount

THE 2nd DMA PHILIPPINES
2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION
THE PHILIPPINES LARGEST EVENT FOR DIRECT & INTERACTIVE MARKETERS

Direct Marketing Association Philippines

AUGUST 18 & 19, 2005
HOTLINE: (632) 896-0639

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR
Franchise Excellence Awards 2005
Galing Pinoy. Beyond Boundaries

CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA FOR JUDGING

- Outstanding Filipino Franchisee of the Year -
- International Master Franchisee of the Year -
- Most Promising Filipino Franchisee of the Year -
- Franchise Marketing Campaign of the Year -
- Franchisee of the Year -

Deadline for submission of nominees is on July 30, 2005

FEA 2005 is sponsored and supported by

Join the Biggest Franchise Event of the Year!
FRANCHISE 2005
Philippine International Franchise Conference & Expo
ACHIEVE DREAMS & BEYOND

CONFERENCE
July 14 – 15, 2005
The Manila Philippine Plaza

EXPO
July 15 – 17, 2005
World Trade Center Metro Manila

FOR MORE INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:
Philippine Franchise Association

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board yesterday approved a 2 percentage point hike in the reserve requirement for banks to take effect on Friday next week to siphon off excess liquidity that put pressure on inflation and foreign exchange rates.

The move, which appears aimed at quelling the Monetarypeg dreams, additionally, The new retaliated to an hike day late of $6.39 to $1 from closing at $6.28 or 11 centavos lower than the $6.34 finish on Wednesday.

"The idea is to mop up excess liquidity in the system which can be inflationary. Portion of this excess liquidity found to way to the foreign exchange market resulting in the strengthening of the peso," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said in a press briefing after yesterday's Monetary Board meeting.

"A currency depreciation also tends to be inflationary. This measure will help offset inflationary pressures," he said, noting that the 2-percentage point hike in reserves would siphon off P80 billion from the financial system.

The percentage of regular or statutory reserves, or the portion of deposits and deposit substitutes that banks with head offices would be raised from 9 to 11 percent while the liquidity reserves would be raised from 18 to 11 percent.

The regular reserve ratio is kept with the BSP a quarter of which the BSP pays the banks a 6-percent interest rate.

Liquidity reserves refer to the portion of funds required to be placed in readily-available instruments.

"Of course, this will be reviewed in succeeding meeting here and we'll see if there are any adjustments that will be taken," Tetangco said.

He said the BSP's hiking the reserves is intended the moderation of the reserves is in order to lower interest rates.

The latest increase in the reserve requirement will raise the banks' financial intermediation rate by 0.50 percentage points, BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo explained.

The MB last hiked the reserve requirement on peso deposits and deposit substitutes of banks and quasi-banks by two percentage points to 19 percent in February last year, as a precaution to ignite inflation as well as to curb the slump in depreciation then.

Shares rise 1.89% . . .

Tetangco said yesterday's increase in the reserve requirement would help offset the impact of the recent increase in the Overnight Reverse Repurchase (RRP) rate.

The RRP rate is the rate at which the BSP borrows money from banks.

The RRP rate was increased by 25 basis points to 7.25 percent last June 30.

Tetangco said the BSP's decision to increase the RRP rate was in response to the Federal Reserve's decision to increase the US Fed funds rate by 25 basis points to 3.25 percent.

The Fed has increased the US Fed funds rate by 25 basis points at each of its last nine meetings

PNCC approves start of ₱11-B SLEX upgrade

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE National Construction Corp. has given MTD Manila Expressway Corp. the go-ahead to start the ₱11-billion upgrade of the South Luzon Expressway.

MTD Manila Expressway, a unit of Malaysia's MTD Capital, has invested over $3.5 million in current money to the PNCC as a proof of its financial capability.

"This also represents MTD's advance funding for the SLEX project," said PNCC president Arthur Aguilar in an interview.

The first was turned over to the Malaysian firm applied for a supplemental Toll Operations Agreement the other day.

The SLEX upgrade involves the rehabilitation of the Alabang viaduct (Toll Road 1) in Muntinlupa City, the expansion of the Alabang to Sta. Rosa portion to eight lanes, the Sta. Rosa to Calamba segment expansion to six lanes (Toll Road 3) and the widening of the Calamba to the Tutuban road to four lanes (Toll Road 4).

MTD Capital is the second largest toll operator in Malaysia. The listed company also has service projects in Indonesia.

PNCC inked its agreement with Hopewell Crown early this year. MTD Capital, as the new owner of the project signed the document.

MTD Manila Expressway Corp. is the new name of Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc.

Control of Hopewell Crown has changed hands three times since the original owner, Hong Kong's Hopewell Holdings Ltd. of Gordon Wu signed an agreement in 1995 to rehabilitate and operate the SLEX.

The Malaysian toll operator now owns 67 percent of the company and has the option to control up to 77 percent. Northeast Development and Acquisitions Corp., a Philippine group that acquired rights over Hopewell Crown last year sold its stake to MTD.

Mark Stowell, officer in-charge of MTD in the Philippines said that 33 percent of the company might be sold to a strategic partner.

The Malaysian firm will soon start negotiations with the Toll Regulatory Board for the hike.

GIR hits all-time high of $17.6B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves reached an all-time high of $17.66 billion as of end-June, shored up by national government deposits and earnings from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' overseas investments.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco yesterday said the country's GIR increased by 2.2 percent in June from $17.28 billion a month ago.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments—is an indicator of the country's ability to service its foreign exchange requirements mainly for importation or debt servicing.

The GIR build-up also provides psychological support for the peso by improving the BSP's capacity to quell speculative attacks against the local currency.

Tetangco said the BSP would continue allowing the market to determine the foreign exchange rate and that the central bank would come in only if needed.

"The foreign exchange inflows, however, were partly offset by the foreign exchange requirements for the repayment of maturing NG and BSP obligations," he said.

He said the end-June GIR level could cover about four months of importation and payments for services.

This level was also equivalent to 3.1 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 2.7 times based on residual maturity," Tetangco said.

While there was no new global bond offering in June, the government made new foreign exchange deposit placements with the BSP most likely from overseas development assistance facilities made available by multilateral and bilateral lenders.

The government earlier announced plans to increase use of official development assistance from traditional and bilateral donors to lower the cost of foreign borrowings.

It was planning to tap about $500 million worth of GIBs this year, representing 22.5 percent of its $4-billion foreign borrowing requirement.

The strong GIR build-up since the start of the year has been aided by proceeds from public sector borrowings.

Japan to sell $4.6-B stake in JR Tokai

TOKYO—The Japanese government on Thursday unveiled plans to sell up to $4.6 billion of shares in General Japan Railway Co. (JR Tokai) as part of its efforts to trim the country's massive public debt.

The Japan Railways Construction, Transport and Technology Agency said it planned to sell up to 600,000 JR Tokai shares, or about a 27 percent stake.

That would be worth some 520 billion yen ($4.64 billion) at JR Tokai's closing price on Thursday.

The government body currently owns 866,000 shares in the railway operator, or 39.6 percent of the total.

JR Tokai, which runs bullet trains between Tokyo and the western city of Osaka, was created in 1987 in the privatization of Japanese National Railways (JNR), cleanly inflicted state monopoly that was split into seven Japan Railways (JR) companies.

The final offering price and number of shares to be sold will be set between July 22 and 27, following a book building period scheduled to start on July 13.

Nomura Holdings Inc., Japan's largest brokerage, and UBS of Switzerland were hired on April 12 to lead manage the offering.

The global offering, which could generate about 5.8 billion yen in underwriting fees, was originally expected by the government had said it planned to finish selling JR Tokai shares by March 2006 as part of a long-running programs to sell land assets and cut debt.

Japan's outstanding public-sector debt reached a record 751 trillion yen ($6.7 trillion) at the end of December—about 150 percent of gross domestic product.

Seeking to reduce that bigger, the government, which has fully privatized two other rail firms—East Japan Railway Co. (JR East) and West Japan Railway Co. (JR West)—is undertaking many of its shares in former state monopolies.

It sold $2.87 billion of shares in Japan Tobacco Inc., the world's third largest tobacco group, in three separate offerings, a $2.3 billion offering of JR West stock the previous month.

The government also plans to sell its $4.7-billion stake in former telecommunications monopoly Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. by March 2006, reducing its holding in Japan's dominant telecom firm to near the legal minimum of one-third. Reuters

Oil at new high, scares markets

LONDON—Oil prices surged to a new record of $82 a barrel on Thursday as the year's first bearish surprise threatened US Gulf production and refining, making fears about pressure worse worldwide.

US light crude for August delivery by mercantile afternoon set a new high at $82.18, up .82 cents. Brent crude in London climbed 45 cents to $80.70 a barrel, also a new record.

Oil prices are up nearly 30 percent from the start of the year as traders fear refiners are ill-prepared to meet peak economic demand this summer, especially for cleaner-burning diesel and heating oil.

Stocks in the US Gulf of Mexico composited oil drone sources by threatening fuels under production and refinery operations, impairing oil companies' ability to build up supplies.

Tropical Storm Chantal was upgraded on Wednesday to become the season's first oil, and has made as it moved through the central Caribbean, posing it on track for the oil and natural gas fields off the Gulf Coast on Friday, the National Hurricane Center said.

Chiefs forced energy companies to shut in some 1,900,000 bar with per day (bpd) of output and some refinery units to close, officials and the US government said.

The unusually early appearance of four named storms before the official June 1 start of hurricane season and related production of last September's four, which knocked out 45 million barrels of Gulf output and helped oil prices climb past $30 a barrel for the first time.

"A hurricane should have this kind of impact," said Tetsu Emori, chief commodities strategist at Mitsui Bussan Futures.

"There are no bearish factors in the market. It is very difficult to see prices going down quickly."

Oil prices have rocketed despite the absence of any sudden supply outages in the first half of this year, with optimism over forward

A WORKER fills a motorbike with fuel at a petrol station in Bangkok. With global crude oil prices hovering around record highs, governments across Asia are facing political storms after scrapping fuel subsidies or raising prices at the pump by up to 20 percent to relieve pressure on budgets. AP

on prospects for a tight fourth quarter.

"Traders are betting this run of luck weather overtime for the northern winter build up—so that winter Decade is, in a sense, part of the script," Robin Cooper, commodity analyst for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said in a note.

Speculators are hoping that refiners will be hard pressed to build up enough inventories of distillate fuels heating oil and diesel before the winter.

In June, US distillates demand averaged an unusually strong 3.7 percent more than the same period last year and gasoline demand was 1.6 percent higher, US data showed.

Although US crude oil inventories are healthy at near their highest in six years, distillate stocks are on the lower half of their normal range for this time of year.

US data due late yesterday was forecast to show crude stocks down 1.1 million barrels last distillate inventories up 1.3 million barrels and gasoline stocks up 2 million barrels, analysts polled by Reuters said on Wednesday.

Opec Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) should wait and see what prices do before releasing discussion of a second production hike of 500,000 bpd, because Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said on Wednesday.

Opec president Alkhalifa Ahmad al-Sabah of Kuwait said last week the second would extend, or easing formula export limits if prices topped $30 again.

Analysts say more crude production is unlikely to cool a market that is rising due to refinery bottlenecks. Reuters

JP Morgan bearish on US, likes Japan

HONG KONG—The US Federal Reserve will cause interest rates more than people expect and US corporate earnings are going to disappoint, sliding it to 7 percent off the S&P 500 index this year, JP Morgan Asset Management said.

Equity rate facts are also low up dramatic on economic growth and oil prices, global equity strategist Abhijit Chakraborty told a media briefing in Hong Kong on Thursday.

"All of these factors could start leading through and really start hurting overall growth," he warned. "My concern is next year when the economy begins to demonstrate that it's not that where the markets are really going to have a bad year."

Users the boards US outlook, expert chose some markets are unlikely to do better, he said.

"If China doesn't pick up, I don't think you can have a hope in hell with any material stocks in the world, as product's more to the buying steel stocks or chemical stocks in Japan," said Chakraborty.

"But I'm very bullish on Japanese financials," he said, adding an expected return of in. Rates to Japan and the removal of the zero interest rate policy by the Bank of Japan would be positive for the sector.

Chakraborty believes India is the most exciting market in the region, with services outsourcing likely to remain a major driver for this fourth largest economy.

"The quality of Indian companies remains some of the best in the region and also India as a reserve dollar diversified market," he said, but added the market is no longer cheap at most 14 times earnings.

Chakraborty favors stocks such as ICICI Bank Ltd., pottery tile maker Hero Honda Motors Ltd., and top cement group Gracim Industries Ltd.

A flat yield curve, strategist Jill Zeiler, rising wage rates and higher energy prices from record oil and commodity prices are likely to slow US earnings growth, he predicted.

"All the favorable factors that drove earnings in the last three years and stocks up very handily are changing," he said, pointing to recent warnings from firms such as air-engine carrier Delta Corp. and International Paper.

The current reporting season is expected to show US companies' profit growth slowing to its lowest level in five years.

According to data from Reuters Estimates, expectations for profits companies in the S&P 500 index have dropped by 7.1 percent, well off from the 25.7 percent growth seen in the second quarter of 2000.

Credit prices hit a record high of $61.66 a barrel on Thursday and have risen by this week. Bigger more interest rate hikes after US ing its target funds rate for the ninth straight time to 3.25 percent.

JP Morgan sees the Fed easing by 50 basis points by the first half of the year and expects the funds rate to be at 4.50 percent by yearend. It sees the oil price at $40 to $70 this year.

Chakraborty is negative on Japanese and cyclical stocks, concerns on the retail sector but bullish on oil services and equipment companies, healthcare and food and beverage producers such as Nestle, Unilever, Cadbury and Kellogg. Reuters

AN INDIAN farmworker waits with his bullock drawn cart for supplies outside a petroleum company in Mumbai. India's federal cabinet last month raised gasoline and diesel prices by as much as 7.5 percent to offset higher international oil prices which rose to $82 a barrel. Oil consumption in India has been steadily increasing in the rapidly growing economy as industries have stepped up production and automobile ownership grows. AP

China firm still keen on Unocal bid

BEIJING—CNOOC Ltd. will meet all conditions set by takeover target Unocal Corp. for its $18.5 billion bid to become the Chinese company's first ever win from Chevron Corp., a person close to the situation said on Thursday.

But the source, who said the talks "are going well," added that Unocal is still trying to decide whether CNOOC's proposed $18.5 billion offer meets the regulatory and political risks that could delay or block approval of a deal.

"Unocal is trying to strike a fine balance between the premium in the CNOOC offer and the regulatory uncertainty associated with the bid," the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters.

"They have to consider the two elements," said the source, who is familiar with the merger talks between the state-run Chinese company and California-based Unocal.

The latest Chevron takeover oil producer is competing head-on with global oil major Chevron in majority Unocal, whose oil and gas assets are mainly in Asia.

All-cash offer

CNOOC's all-cash offer, largely backed by Chinese government-owned entities, tops Chevron's stock-and-cash bid of more than $16 billion.

Unocal and CNOOC executives have been meeting on the proposed bid since shortly after CNOOC made its offer two weeks ago.

But so far, Unocal management is continuing to recommend the Chevron deal to its shareholders, who are due to meet on Aug. 10 to vote on Chevron's bid.

The source said Unocal is requiring CNOOC to meet certain conditions before it would consider recommending the Chinese bid.

"CNOOC will be able to meet all the points raised by Unocal," the source said, but declined to specify those conditions.

Chevron's spokesperson, Don Campbell, reiterated the company position. "Our agreement remains the only offer on the table. The Unocal board continues to stand behind our agreement and recommend it to its shareholders."

Still opposition

CNOOC's bid has sparked strong opposition from some US lawmakers, who express concerns that a sale of Unocal to CNOOC could hurt US energy security.

That has raised concerns that a CNOOC-Unocal deal could be rejected by US authorities.

CNOOC chair Fu Chengyu, in an interview with the Washington Post, said that CNOOC may consider raising its bid if that is what it takes to win Unocal.

CNOOC has also asked a top-level US government panel, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), to review its bid and allay concerns that it might threaten US energy security.

"We are busy discussing things. I have a lot of contacts," Fu said. "CNOOC and Financial Secretary Tang Shuo told Reuters, after returning to Beijing following discussions with Unocal's executives in New York.

Despite the competitive tension between Chevron and CNOOC over Unocal, Tang said the business relationship between the two companies remains one final. Reuters

World economy heating up, economists say

WASHINGTON—The global economy seems to be heating up again as the first half comes to an end, economists of activity and underlying demand for crude.

After months of anxious among policy makers and economists over the durability of the world expansion, there are tentative signs that activity picked up in mid-year.

Several oil prices over $60 per barrel are acting as a headwind, economists say, but there is no evidence yet to harm. ergy costs threaten an immediate shift into recession.

If anything, high oil prices are exerting the opposite influence of activity and underlying demand for crude.

Monthly surveys of some 10,000 purchasing around the world showed business several up again in June—with output, new orders and employment all pushing to post during the month and the manufacturing sector leading the way.

Analysts say these surveys of corporate executives from North America, Europe and Asia indicate annualized gross domestic product growth of about 3.5 percent in the third quarter.

That is due of the International Monetary Fund's April forecast of a 4.2 percent world growth rate in 2001, but up considerably from half a point from several quarter estimates and close to the 20-year average world growth rate of 3.6 percent.

"The results point to a modest acceleration in global GDP growth to the third quarter," economist Stephen S. Roach, Morgan, which aggregates and tracks these monthly surveys for investors.

A global index, where a reading above 50 denotes expansion, edged up to 53.9 from 53.8 in May. New orders jumped more than a point to 55.5.

Some leading indicators of the world economy—many of which have been flagging gloom for months—have also started to show signs of improving.

Goldman Sachs' in-house Global Leading Indicator rose to 1.9 percent year-on-year in June from 1.7 percent in May, with a measure of monthly momentum also pointing up a notch.

Third-quarter consumer buying plans around the world remain optimistic. Recruitment firm Manpower's quarterly survey of 41,000 firms in 23 countries last month showed a net 16 percent of firms planning more staff in the coming three months—up a point from the time last year.

Long-term bond-rating environments in Europe have been mostly overpositive—in most cases lower than they were at the start of the year. This has helped underscore the US housing boom and more likely elsewhere too.

Larry Kantor, chief global economist at Lehman Brothers, notes it is that low long-term interest rate environment that is softening the blow from high oil prices.

"This balancing act between rising oil prices and falling bond yields has produced solid, if unspectacular, economic growth," said Kantor, who predicts world GDP growth in about 4 percent over the remainder of the year.

"The future course of activity depends importantly on how these two factors play out."

Nationally, Japan looks to be one of the upside surprises.

So long downturn economy still the month second biggest when measured by market exchange rates, grew 0.9 percent in the first quarter. Domestic demand growth is robust and leading indicators bounced back strongly in May after an April lull.

US first-quarter growth was revised up to 2.0 percent from 1.3 percent, with manufacturing and consumer confidence all picking up again after a soft patch in the spring.

China—long a prime engine of the world economy—is showing more mixed signals. Investment and domestic demand growth remain strong, but oil consumption has tailed off and surveys of local purchasing managers disappoint. Jane Abraham.

The euro zone remains sluggish. But even there the mixed reading sector got a boost this week from news of an unexpected 1.1 percent increase in May sales, and new car sales in Italy, France and Spain all enhanced in June. Reuters

No need to amend oil deregulation law, says panel

By Abigail L. Ho

THE INDEPENDENT panel tasked to review RA 8479 or the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Law said there was nothing wrong with the law and, therefore, no amendment was needed.

The panel, however, recommended that Petron Corp., which remained partly owned by the government, be made the "price moderator" for both price increases and rollbacks.

In a presentation yesterday panel chair Cielito Habacon, former chair of SGV & Co. and former commissioner of the Energy Regulatory Commission, said it would not support or initiate any change to the Oil Deregulation Law in Republic Act 8479.

He said the Department of Energy should work with the proposed price moderator.

Toni (Philippines) Corp. president and managing director Jeff Isherwood, however, expressed concern over this suggestion as this could be seen as a quasi-regulatory action.

"Our concern is really the Petron issue. We can't have the government controlling prices through Petron. That's quasi-regulatory," he told reporters after yesterday's presentation.

He said that if the recommended Total acquisition is done, done in its investments as Getting facts. However, he said the company would not pull out of the Philippine market.

But Tarrazgon, spokesperson for the new players' group, Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association, said "taking Petron a "price moderator" would tend to limit the industry and narrow Petron's shareholders.

He said that when Petron went public with 40% stockholders bought their shares at around P9 each. Now, these shares are traded on the Philippine Stock Exchange for only P3 per share.

Pinning pressure on Petron in being down, prices could further hurt its share prices in the long run, he said.

"If there's an influence on Petron to adopt lower prices, other oil firms may be forced to close down. There will no longer be competition in the market, and that will be bad for consumers," he said.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. general manager for external affairs Roberto Ongpin, for his part, said the panel could have been referring to Petron's price leadership, being the company with the biggest market share.

If that was what the panel meant, he said there was no issue. The "moderator" role, however, was unfair to Petron.

On the part of Petron, public affairs manager Virginia Bautista said the role of price moderator was "unacceptable."

Habacon then clarified the panel's recommendation, saying the "price moderator" role would not entail any form of price regulation.

"Suppose cost an order. It like we'll be asking them (Petron) for a favor, which can be either granted or denied," he explained.

The panel's other findings included the lack of visibility of increasing a subsidy mechanism similar to the top-related one's Oil Price Stabilization Fund, the absence of controls to the industry as far as smuggling evidence was concerned, and the fact that oil firms annually earned more during the regulated regime than now.

It also recommended that a price adjustment mechanism be put in place for industries that are heavily dependent on oil, that the DOE continue to develop alternative energy sources and that the DOE be more vigilant in monitoring prices as well as in sensing the possible presence of cartels.

WTO used as scapegoat

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

GRADUES of the Aquino agriculture power duty decided to unite with industry leaders to forge common front for the ministerial meeting on the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations this December in Hong Kong. The Alyansa is the largest farmer-fisherfolk association in the Philippines.

In a meeting, a unanimous decision was reached. If developed countries insisted on imposing unfavorable agricultural tariff reductions on developing countries without corresponding reductions in trade-distorting subsidies, we will work to stop the WTO Round. This is because "no deal is better than a bad deal." However, if both developed and developing countries work together in a spirit of enlightened self-interest, we will assist in progressive WTO power. Then, much to our good products. This way, the WTO meeting will be beneficial for all.

Common cause

Philippine agriculture and industry have a common economic fighting for fair trade. Both have suffered the brunt of unfair trade practices because of too rapid tariff reductions. The happened in a case where we have potential comparative advantage, but need more time to compete with cheap and often unfairly subsidized imports.

However, many blame the WTO for most of our trade-related problems. It is the same to the point where the WTO is used as a convenient scapegoat where the problem really lies with us.

For example, while the WTO allowed a bound tariff of 40 percent on our vegetables, our government unilaterally imposed a 7 percent tariff on most of them. Thankfully, in recent years, the Department of Agriculture has corrected this by increasing the tariffs on some of our vegetables to more desirable levels.

Undervaluation

A more damaging example of using WTO as a scapegoat is the undervaluation of imported products. Agriculture can learn much from industry in this area.

The shoe industry has lost thousands of jobs because of undervaluation. According to Federation of Philippine Industries Magnapopulous Philippines, imported "leather uppers" shoes from China were valued at US$1.6 a pair in 1997 and paid the corresponding tariffs and value-added tax (VAT) on that basis.

Today, these same shoes are unfairly valued at $1.32, or only 8 percent of its former value. This is consistent with the information the Fair Trade Alliance gave the Alyansa legislators a month ago. From 1999 to 2003, the volume of shoe imports from China increased 33 times. However, government revenue from these rose by only 3 times.

When Customs Solutions, SMP president, complained about in 1998, Customs officials said the WTO is a scapegoat. They gunned up 1 of the WTO's Bilateral Customs Valuation.

This means: "The customs value of imported goods shall be the transaction value, that is the price actually paid or payable for the goods when sold for export to the country of importation...."

Consequently, salesmen as importers presented invoices lower than they may have been illegally tampered with (but listed $1.32 instead of $1.6.00 for a pair of leather shoes, the Customs valuation would tell fabricators he had no choice but to use it for costs of the WTO.

Late last year, SEA Representative of the Federation of Philippine Industries pointed out to the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Anti-Smuggling that the same Bureau of Customs Performance Audit for 1998 to 2000 states: "Nothing in this agreement shall be construed as restricting or calling into question the rights of customs administration to satisfy themselves as to the truth or accuracy of any statement, documents, or declaration presented for customs valuation purposes."

Other countries such as India take full advantage of Article 17. According to Jose Severino, executive director of the Association of Free Chemical Manufacturers of the Philippines, India passed a law which requires certain costly customs valuation and only in cases where "in the ordinary course of trade ... under fully competitive conditions."

Since early this year, the shoe industrial workers have been gaining ground. Salvacion and the Customs Valuation and Classification Review Committee have been implementing his petition for correct valuation. Though a final decision has yet to come out after seven years of struggle, he commended the initiatives of Customs Commissioner Albert Lina for the progress achieved so far.

Conclusion

The undervaluation described above also occurs in agriculture, particularly in relation to sugar and sugar-containing products.

As agriculturist and industry come in progress for the WTO negotiations, both sectors should not be deceived by unscrupulous elements taken duty our WTO as a scapegoat for their decisions that jeopardize our very livelihoods. Rather, we should understand WTO regulations in detail, just as Ng and Severino did, and then use the WTO to our advantage in the appropriate circumstances.

(The author is the chair of Agrimark, a private sector initiative, former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. He welcomes comments, email agrimarkphil@yahoo.com or telefax 451-1650)

Foreign groups keen on RP natural gas, wind power

A NUMBER of international financial institutions are keen on investing in the country's compressed natural gas (CNG), liquified natural gas (LNG) and wind power sectors, seeing the huge potential that the Philippines has in these three areas.

Energy Undersecretary Peter Abaya yesterday identified these institutions as International Risk Consultants Inc., United States Bank Corp., USA Financials Inc., JP Morgan, Citibank Group, US Export-Import Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corp. He said meetings with these institutions had already been set.

In terms of investment, he said an LNG terminal for the transport sector, for example, would cost between $600 million and $1 billion, excluding the pipelines that would carry the natural gas from the source to the terminal.

The government is currently pushing the use of CNG as an alternative fuel for the transport sector. A memorandum of agreement with Mitsubishi Corp. Gas Co. Power Project consortium member Shell Philippines Exploration BV puts the price of CNG at only P14.52 per cubic meter, half the current price of diesel at around P29 a liter.

However, none of Mitsubishi's 3,000 MW capacity, roughly 2, 700 MW is being used to run three gas-fired power plants: the 1,000-MW Sta. Rita and 500-MW San Lorenzo of the Lopezes' First Gas Power Corp. and the 1,200-MW Ilijan plant being run by a consortium led by Korea Electric Power Corp.

Additional investments will have to be made to boost the consortium's current gas-production capacity.

On the wind power side, Abaya said the financial institutions also had "preliminary discussions" with the Department of Energy on possible investments in wind power development.

"They were actually surprised that the Philippines has more wind power potential at 70,000 megawatts (MW) than the United States," he told reporters. Abaya said the

BPI moving closer to acquiring Prudential Bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANK of the Philippine Islands, the country's second biggest bank, is moving closer to acquiring a majority stake in the Ramos family's Prudential Bank, banking sources said.

A potential takeover of the much-smaller Prudential Bank is not yet enough to topple Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. as the country's biggest bank, but it will close the gap with the banking arm of tycoon George Ty in terms of total resources.

Banking sources disclosed that majority of shareholders associated with the Ramos family was near-home on selling their stake to BPI.

After months of negotiations, the sources said an agreement between the shareholders of the two publicly listed banks may be reached soon.

A ranking BPI source yesterday confirmed that lawyers of both BPI and the Ramos family were now working on a possible deal, but would not elaborate.

Another banking source said the third-generation Ramoses had long been wrestling in votes from the banking business for the oldest among the cousins, Prudential Bank president Jose Santos, was reluctant "because of sentimental reasons."

The family, which controls about 70.80 percent of the bank, founded Prudential Bank in 1952.

In a separate interview, a high-ranking official of Prudential Bank yesterday confirmed efforts to buy out the family's stake but stressed no deal was final.

"There have been many offers, but at the moment there is still nothing in," the source said.

BPI, for its part, had said it was on the hunt for new acquisitions after completing its integration with Far East Bank and Trust Co.

The BPI source said a fresh acquisition should not come as a surprise, given the bank's history of gobbling up other banks.

BPI has been growing through acquisitions to fast-track its growth.

It merged with Despits Bank and Trust Co. in 1974, followed by the merger with Commercial Bank and Trust Co. in 1981, Asia Investment and Development Corp. as well as Makati Leasing and Finance Corp. in 1992 and Family Bank and Trust Co. in 1993.

It continued its expansion with the acquisition of Grayton Banking Corp. in 1996, Ayala Insurance Holdings Corp. in 2000, the East Bank and Trust Co. in 2000 and 1st Bank Philippines in 2002.

As of the first quarter of this year, BPI has total resources of about P366 billion while Prudential has about P58 billion.

Their combined resources stand at P444 billion, against Metrobank's P463 billion.

Prudential Bank, the 18th biggest among commercial banks, has a loan portfolio of P12.8 billion and a deposit base of P43 billion.

"If this takeover is true, this is a good acquisition," said Alfred Ty, research head of stock brokerage CLSA Philippines.

"The main attraction of Prudential Bank is its branch network which shall enable BPI to expand market reach and augment its over 700 branches," he said. With a report from Elena Beth L. Sinchioo.

MB approves Maynilad rehabilitation plan

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE MONETARY Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved the rehabilitation plan of Maynilad Water Services Inc.

This was confirmed by rehabilitation receiver Renato Bernardo in an interview with the INQUIRER yesterday.

Bernardo said the approval would mean the payment of a combined $112 million to foreign and local bank creditors and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) by July 13.

The MB approval is a pre-requisite to the submission of Maynilad's corporate restructuring program to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The water utility serves more than six million consumers in the west zone covering Manila and neighboring cities.

It was into financial difficulties due to its heavy debt burden and operational challenges.

The MWSS says Maynilad's list of creditors with an exposure of P8 billion, representing unpaid construction fees.

The other creditors accounting for the remaining P18 billion include Credit Agricole Indosuez Merchant Bank Asia Ltd., Citibank NA, Barclays Bank plc and BNP Paribas, Equitable-PCI Bank, Allied Commercial Banking Corp. and the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines.

Bernardo added that the implementation of Maynilad's rehabilitation program would not be stopped by the petition for preliminary injunction filed by the civic groups before the Supreme Court.

According to the revised plan approved by Branch 96 of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, Maynilad's majority shareholder, Benpres Holdings Inc. (BHI) of the Lopez group, will formally exit and divest all its shares in the company valued at $22.7 million.

Shares of BHI, French partner, Ondeo Philippines (formerly known as Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux), would also be reduced to 13 percent.

Bernardo said that some 89 percent of Maynilad's shares would be up for subscription by the BPSDS, which favored a debt- to-equity conversion.

The banks, on the other hand, preferred to be paid in cash.

Tupperware to sell beauty products

By Ronnel W. Domingo

PLASTICS firm Tupperware Co. is branching out to beauty products in a bid to push up sales and counter threats from smaller products, direct-selling competitors.

Jane de Jesus Buenaventura, president of Tupperware Philippines Inc., said in a briefing that the United States-based mother company had bought a firm called Beauty Control three years ago as part of its diversification efforts.

"Beauty Control was serving only the US market before Tupperware bought it," Jesus said. "We are launching this outside the US starting with the Philippines, Brazil and Venezuela."

Jesus explained that Tupperware Philippines expected beauty products to make up 15-15 percent of sales by 2006.

"We are striving for a 50:50 split between our traditional storage products and beauty products, which we hope to achieve in five to six years," the Mexican executive said.

Also, Jesus said the company had embarked on a campaign to strengthen its sales force in terms of numbers and market coverage.

"We aim at having 25,000 active sales ligents) (but are) reaching 25,000 households at any given time," he said.

As for sales revenue, the firm has a target growth rate of 25 percent.

"Last year, Tupperware Philippines was adjudged 'turnaround company of the year' in the global Tupperware network," Jesus said.

He said that, in the previous years, Tupperware Philippines' sales contracted with the rise of other direct-selling firms that offer a variety of product lines to consumers.

Further, Jesus said Tupperwares would continue to sell its products by direct-selling and would never resort to retailing with stores.

Tupperware Philippines' production plant in Cabuyao, Laguna—which is the biggest in Tupperware' Asia-Pacific operations—can yield 330,000 customs of products a year.

The company exports 80 percent of its output to Australia, Japan and even the United States.

Cocktales

Continued from B1

the central bank's policy-making body had earlier ordered disposed of no later than 2004...considering that at least P6.67 billion in bank funds were used by the to-family of Equitable Bank to acquire the block in its 1999 buyout of PCIBank.

Equitable PCIBank comptroller Ricardo Bautista also said the Monetary Board was equally wrong to order EBC Investments to provide additional capital as a result of its money-losing placements.

"(The) EPCIB profitability, which was accompanied by an equally dramatic rise in its traded share prices...clearly established that provisioning for the EPCIB shares held by EBC Investments is unnecessary," Marcos said.

From an average price of P86/share, Equitable PCIBank shares have been trading at less than P50, resulting in a more than P1.2-billion loss for EBC Investments. After a four-year grace period, a concerned Monetary Board finally ordered the investment bank to submit a capital buildup program no later than the end of the month.

Despite the 30-percent drop since 1999, EBC Investments has adamantly refused to write down the value of the 30-percent block. According to Bautista, the new, tougher accounting and banking rules applies only "if there is a permanent decline in the value of the security."

Dilo Dema, Equitable PCIBank general counsel and corporate secretary, declined to define what "permanent decline" means, or even give a time frame for it.)

And, in a brief Stock Exchange announcement, the Equitable PCIBank comptroller also maintained that the subsidiary's projected loses would not impact on the bottom line of the parent bank.

"The change in accounting policy does not affect the financial health of a company as it merely changes the method by which pertain company financials are reported," Marcos wrote the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Gold and Silverios

THE ABUBO family feud is worsening, with Rep. Lotlot Silverio now visiting President Arroyo to remove Insurance Commissioner Benjamin Santos, for his alleged "prying on private lives" and for his "unethical, unfair, and improper" investigation of the Silverio-owned Commercial Guarantee Assurance Corp.

Silverio, who chairs the committee on inter-parliamentary relations and diplomacy, is being used along with her husband, Rizalito Silverio Jr., by Silverio's cousin, Ricardo Jr. over the control of Commercial Guarantee.

The junior Silverio, the polo player and not the flamenco dancer-painter we reported on Wednesday (that one happens to be Dante, Ricardo Junior's stepbrother), had asked for the help of the Insurance Commission to pursue his majority claim over the family-owned insurance company.

Heard through the grapevine

DESPITE their children having all moved to their respective homes years ago, celebrity couple Billy and Patsy Herbosons are giving the construction industry a boost by completely renovating their already fabulous home in Brookfarbes into what neighbors say would be a French chateau mansion, complete with a ballroom.

(Cocktales may be mailed at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com.)

InqBox

Question of the Week

If you were President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and faced with the current controversies, what would you do?

Senders of at least 20 texts or published in Tuesday's InqBox will each receive an "Inquirer Shirt."

Win this "Inquirer" shirt

Type your inquirer box name/age/city message.

Text your answers to 2227 (Globe subscribers) or 2227 (Smart or Talk 'N Text subscribers).

(Maximum of 160 characters)

Short Message Service (SMS) rate is P4.50/SIM.

Please include your complete mailing address to 2227 or 2227 so that prizes will be mailed to them.

Inquirer ad rates/specs/circ/mailing address to 2227 or 2227 so that prizes will be mailed to them.

LIFESTYLE

Lito Cheloi Bautista-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

PLANET Ocean watches from Omega

JEAN-CLAUDE Monachon, Omega Ltd. VP for product development, and Olivier Hugenin-Vallet, area sales manager

Ocean deep

While the first Seamaster went as deep as 300 meters, Planet Ocean, its modern edition, goes twice as deep at 600 m

By Anna A. Jamboro

IT'S like the ocean on the wrist. Or, as its VP says, it gives the "emotion of going under the water."

The latest offering from Swiss watchmaker Omega completes an last its series of modern takes on its iconic 1957 classic watches: the Speedmaster, the Railmaster and, now, the Seamaster.

"We took the watch that was very successful 50 years ago and adapted how it the design philosophy of the third millennium. From the away it looks the same, but we have improved the technology and changed some details of the design," says Jean-Claude Monachon, VP for product development of Omega Ltd.

While the first Seamaster went as deep as 300 meters, Planet Ocean, its modern edition, goes twice as deep at 600 m. A timeless feature, for instance, is the distinct unidirectional rotating bezel, grooved with the classic double numerals. (Not comes in two colors: matte, anodized black or sporty orange. It's not a coincidence, though, that black and orange are two of the colors most visible underwater.

Trendier colors

Monachon says Omega's choice for trendier colors is part of the company's marketing position, which is: While it pays to produce something useful, such as a diver's watch, it is still attracted to what's fashionable. The color orange, he says, is just as stylish as it is functional.

Both function and design are given equal importance during conceptualization, he says. One cannot do without the other since a great design might not hold in together the watch's mechanism, or vice versa.

Take Planet Ocean's ladies' watch, which Monachon says is fashionable enough to have been produced as a time when big clues are in vogue. Its mechanical watches, such as those manufactured by Omega, the large dials allow bigger movement that in turn provides greater strength to giving accurate time.

But, really now, who needs a watch that can still perfectly function at 600 m underwater? More importantly, how many if ever, actually dive at such depth?

Monachon admits most of Omega's clientele are not even into the underwater sport. "Doing a watch that goes 600 m underwater is useless—we can even go up to 1,000 m," Monachon says.

So it's not the fact that it can go underwater that is important, he says, but finding a watch for everyday life that calls to mind images of the ocean. Like it or not, most people wear Omega watches for the status the brand represents. Image, says Monachon, can mean everything for a premium brand.

As to revolutionize the Omega mechanism is an innovation feature of Planet Ocean called the Co-Axial Escapement. This invention replaces the old mechanism—the heart of every watch—of circular "teeth," those two metallic elements that constantly touch each other, with a device that has a sliding effect instead.

The old mechanism, says Monachon, accumulates minute dust particles due to the friction. More dust means more lubrication to keep the mechanism going. But the oil helps collect too much dust over the years as well that the watch's accuracy drops, or shuts down completely, and would need servicing after three to four years.

With the Co-Axial Escapement, no friction is involved, resulting in much less dust accumulation and the need for lubricants. That means, he says, better mileage for the watch—as in time accuracy even after eight, nine or 10 years.

"We are the only brand in the world with this technology. This is our service to our consumers," Monachon says.

Expectations for Planet Ocean are huge. In Europe alone, a single delivery of 30,000 units was sold out in a matter of weeks.

Planet Ocean also comes with the helium escape valve. This valve allows elements of helium gas, which seeps inside the watch during compression, to escape during decompression with a simple turn of the screw. This exclusive feature prevents any damage, permanent or otherwise, to the watch.

There are 12 models for this line in 45.5 and 42 mm sizes. Bezels and dials are either black or orange, in fact different ranges of orange and brown alligator, steel and rubber.

"While the old adage says never fix anything that isn't broken, especially one that was produced some 250 years ago, Omega, says Monachon, thinks otherwise—sometimes, that is. That risk has paid off richly in the end.

E-mail the author at ajamboro@inquirer.com.ph

SAMSUNG investors: Hyouk Jae Shim, president and CEO, and Hoong-dal Shin, VP for marketing ICT

ENTREPRENEUR Sunil Picarsett

YOUNG business achiever Carlos Rivaldo and wife Marlena Alvarez

FAB architect and interior designer Ed Calma

ANTON Huang, EVP, Sierra Specialists, Inc.

WARNER Manning, popular president and CEO of HSBC

INTERNATIONAL currency trader Mandy Roi Ellwyn

GUESS artist

DAVAO businessman Avisor Lagdameo and wife Dawn Zulueta

AUSTAHN cofounder Iman Joel Santos with his lady-love, gorgeous Lisa Marie Roldan

ARCHITECT and interior designer Cole Mateo

IN THE FIELD at polo: Sunni Dizaldo

Hurrah to the nation! Hurrah to men!

SCARLET at Bonnivision

TRIM. Trim, Crime Lopez and Marcel Crespo

HAIRED Jasmine with David Haugard and Hong Kong banker David Jacob

HEY, palanggas, open the parked "Thing at Ilalimnoy" hatch, featuring cool Axel Ltd, Hong Kong's finest DJ and owner of the famous 999 dance club in Soho, Omg. Team Stylish joined hands with popular Addict Mobile and the hard-to-beat Nokia to bring back to Manilla the world's clubbing pioneer, Ministry of Sound, for a major feel-good Independence Day celebration at the SMC Tent.

As everyone was going ga-ga over a sexy mix tape, some 300-beautiful partyphiles celebrated Philippine Sawtaad Day by dancing the night away to the frisky house cuisine of Ellis Ashenbury Lee and Sunni Ell of the Ministry of Sound.

Feeling the Ministry of Sound vibe were gorgeous Joanne Peñasco and Pixie Ocsak, with Ricky Dalore and award-winning movie and TV act designer Gerry Santos.

For the first time in the party circuit scene, palanggas, for happening, was opened by a rock rendition of the Philippine national anthem, superbly belted out by Scarlet of Bonnivision with Nani Sardillo on lead guitar. The song blew the minds of the proud partygoers who screamed their hearts out, while the colors of our nation ran through the ceiling of the SMC Tent.

There was a super special surprise for the 200 especially chosen ones: the Addict Mobile exclusive V3E silver-the guests screamed for encore and laser lights.

As the decibels hit new notes Randy and Atom Henares, who were scouting the dance floor for possibilities.

Dashing in lavish but to style were fashion designers Randy Ortiz and Tenebl Noreen with Propaganda's Rog Mesia.

It was crystal clear that Team Stylish, with the support of Addict Mobile and Nokia, has done it again.

"It's all about good vibes, through forward-thinking music. My mission is to take the local clubbing culture to the next level, by promoting the new dance music of today," explained Stylish mate man, Dominic Princess, the hard-to-beat, leading dance event promoter, darlings.

TMT, palanggas, as we celebrated our hard-earned independence, we also celebrated our right to party, n'est ce pas ? Au'ere, all Indai !

Without batting an eyelash

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Nokia N8 smartphone

Samsung's man

Samsung is such a hot tot these days. After three or four major happenings, Samsung was at it again, hosting "Men and their Monsters," a lab photo exhibit of some of the Philippines' most elusive, influential and high-profile partying characters, executed by Divine Society king, palanggas.

The smashing and successful opening was held at the Conservatory of the Peninsula Manila. The visual showcase featured some 50 photographs from the trendy magazine.

In honor of the fantastic tale these successful individuals play, Samsung offers the ultimate power tool, the B5501 phone, (which of our own accord, by dubbed), elegantly designed for the definitive man of true style and substance.

Samsung Philippines' hardest president, the amiable Hyouk Jae Shim, explained, "As another side to these personalities came alive, captured through photographs, we are deeper and deeper into the profile of our Samsung B5501 man. (The B5501 is) celebrated as 'The Installer of the year.'"

Added Hyouk: "The Samsung B5501 man is... a successful career person, a father, a friend, an athlete, a hobbyist, a competitor... he is all that and more. In collaboration with them-society, we celebrate these men, a fusion of the love that breathes inspiration and innovation."

Silver Jenny's brilliant Philip Go Unjieng then took screenings and extended appreciation to "the men who gamely performed as we real their other side."

Well, here are some of the photos of the 50 chosen ones, palanggas, photographed by some of today's best hombres.

The B5501 cell phone is a tri-band handset—it's empowerment in a small gorgeous package, which breathes inspiration and innovation. It comes in super sleek midnight black and silver.

Check it out, palanggas. The B5501 is such a smooth, cool looker.

DOMINIC Santos, president, Shopsense and Rustan Supercenters Inc.

ITS party time: Chinggay Andrada and her love, architect Victor Consunji, with Candice Baker and Jigger Antonio

BEAUTY queen and Bigfish man woman Joanne Peñasco and movie star Stormaine Arcega

HOT party pair Gisela Sinyo and Ria Romero

POP Stupot! writer, musician Tek Diaz, with Tim Generation of Ideal Minds

WE LOVE BIGFISH. Polo player Chung Yuta and gorgeous Faith Amigo

HEY. Jane Iriondo-Roley Dalore with Bigfish first lady Pixie Chuah

DANBY Honario, Anja Aranetaa, Elena Kerr, Juli Salazar, Arem Herrera, Dr. Jasmine Burgos and Frank Gallardo

BIGFISH main man and top-of-the-line promoter, Dominic Princess, with guest looking OK Awards of Ministry of Sound

LIFESTYLE

The promise of youth

CHALCEDONY and Swarovski Crystal brooch by Ciara Marasigan

In a short span of time, both Ciara Marasigan and Debbie Co have proven that loving what you do eases the path to success

By Kitty Go
Contributor

YOUTH, it is often said, is wasted on the young. But with today's breed of enterprising "young" inspired by technological and societal changes, youth not only has time, but talent

(See PROMISE, A2)

CD'S collection promises a sense of grace and finesse.

DEBBIE Co

CIARA Marasigan

The promise of youth

LAVYA by Ciara Marasigan for Swarovski's Crystallized Cosmos in Hong Kong

From page C1

on to style.

Whatever the dotcom revolution with tell-you-making millions, sometimes striking, before they turn 30. "Paying dues" is not what it used to be with any assurance for celebrities known for nothing but the freshness of youth. (Yes—Paris Hilton does have a (\$\$\$) million business.) Every time I research fashion centers in different parts of the world, I am always drawn to so-called "young designers." Manila has no different a draw for me. Last month I got to view the lines of two very talented under-30s, namely a clothing line called *Alter 8* by Debbie Co and an accessories line called *Cocoverture* by Ciara Marasigan.

First impressions

The impression *Cocoverture* (cocoverture@ymail.com) made on me was instantaneous. At my book party in Manila, my sister-in-law gave me an oversized ring of pink, clear and pale blue stones secured by wire. Great, I thought, but a would-be girl in the way of dining hooks. However, I have worn the ring almost everyday since.

Also at the party was a pretty girl wearing the most one-of-a-kind, fabulous necklace that really made an impression (of course, I saw this after Mrs. Marasigan, swathed in ensemble, left). She was Ciara Marasigan, designer of the piece and of my new ring. She also happened to be the girlfriend of my former-fee-turned-friend, Swarovski Crystallized Cosmos and lawyer, Angee Gutierrez.

Alter 8 (debbieco@yahoo.com) came to my attention through Debbie Co's brother Dennis. I originally went to view the line in Soho thinking that she was just another kid who wanted to get into the business. She is, after all, scheduled to study at Central St. Martin's in London this summer.

Going through her work in Soho did nothing for my either until I saw the new delivery being unpacked. There I saw what Soho's Desi Joaps and Ishq's Candy Reyes originally saw in her line.

"The first time I saw it, I knew right away it would be sellable," relates Candy Reyes, co-owner of Ishq in Ortigas. "A lot of customers who are not so bold find *Alter 8* to be a good line to start venturing themselves with sweater fashion."

Dressy but not formal

What distinguishes *Alter 8* from most local lines is that the entire collection, as the name implies, is technically what one would wear after work. Those in creative fields like media and fashion will find outstanding pieces for everyday wear. Members of the leisure class would reach for the clothes when they get up, ready for the next party.

Debbie, a 27-year-old graduate of industrial engineering, took a fashion design course at La Salle College International before she decided to cold-call on Ming Yi/F Ancola Plaza, Eurovia Drive, Dasmariñas Village, Makati City (tel. 893-2551 and Soho 02/F Rockwell Lifestyle 890-8911).

She started *Alter 8* simply because she was "just interested in a dressy line." Her personal favorite in her collection are a knit bolero and a black cropped jacket with a ruffled front, puffed sleeves and a cutaway back reminiscent of Tilsace and Ball.

The beauty of the line lies in its practicality—great florals, paisleys and stripes come in forgiving silhouettes like caftans and unstructured jackets—where you can just throw on a top and, depending on the occasion, you are either dressed casually chic or simply dressed.

The line at Soho is more commercial with occasional design diversions from the owner. Best sellers are dress dreams (a wear over jeans and self-belted cap-sleeved horsehair jacket). Ishq allows Debbie total freedom and it is here that she does dressier, more expensive pieces for a more fashion-forward clientele. Where *Alter 8* in Soho is more print- and color-driven, the line at Ishq is more texture-driven with lace, pleating and sweater treatments.

It was also at Ishq that the fashion press discovered Debbie. Previous happened to be there when the owner's fashion-forward clientele, Mega and Inquirer picked up on her style. Yes, had her a line that has been off to a great start in less than a year.

"She's very young but she knows how to put herself out there and has a good sense of what people want to wear," observes Reyes. Gems Gendrez, when Debbie's plans to be based in Manila, After 8 will mainly be even better than it is today.

THE FLIRTY and Festive line focuses on nine hues along with fiery and feminine cuts.

HALTER tops from Ishq.

PRINT- and color-driven ensembles

SOPHISTICATED and elegant, from the 27-year-old Co

CHALLENGING rose quartz...Swarovski crystal pendant and earrings

MOTHER OF PEARL and Swarovski crystal bracelets

then it to today.

Off to a glittering start

Ciara Marasigan got into business because she decided to create some form of decorative centerpiece using some of her grandmother's cutoffs. Unfortunately, the centerpiece project did not work out. Fortunately, she decided to cut up the artistic endeavor into a pendant that impressed friends and family. This is probably why she insists her products are functional art.

Three years ago, she got her first consumer-did project with a commission from Lane Crawford in Hong Kong. She also recently completed a delivery to Tadashi in Los Angeles, a label known for its evening wear. At my book party in Hong Kong, her brooch with a brilliant burst of color caught the eye not only of the South China Morning Post's fashion editor but also the photo editor of Time.

Cocoverture' individually handcrafted pieces take more expense order and never known where the stones and wires will lead her creativity) can be found at Rustan's, Gaisano, Ishq, Beads, e-cycle, Kink and the House of Laurel, where she also does custom orders per with Raja Laurel's famous formula.

The designer classifies herself first as an artist. She has many interests and exhibitions such as the one last year in the UCP and is upcoming one from Ishq, 9-Sept. 8 at the Ayala Museum, between her talents as an artist. At 25, she is also the first jewelry designer to be selected to the Young Designers' Guild (YDG) of the Philippines.

Ciara uses semi-precious stones, freshwater pearls and Swarovski crystals held by stainless steel wire. She will be launching Cocoverture Crystallized Cosmos beads at a Hong Kong jewelry fair that another one of her pieces caught my eye in the "Liquid Sunshine" trend section.

"Lavya," as the designer has christened the piece after a childhood friend, is known in Sanskrit, was an oversized necklace using multi-colored Swarovski crystals set on a flat ivory-colored base resembling huge flower petals.

Cocoverture is distributed in many stores because the designer clearly knows her market. With some disappointment, I asked why her commercial pieces were small compared to what I have seen and there was a dearth of rich, dark colors.

"The local market loves candy-colored stones and Filipinos generally wear smaller things because they have a smaller bone structure," she explains.

Whether large or small, her pieces stand out because they connect the technological cut and color perfection of Swarovski crystals with the natural inconsistency of gemstones such as hand-dyed chalcedony, amethyst, quartz, agate lacah and marbly rhodonite.

In a short span of time, both Ciara Marasigan and Debbie Co have proven that we have what you do earns the path to success. That, and youth. In the words of Ciara, which only someone young could utter, "I'm young and I don't have bone problems yet so I put everything into the business." Well, there are those who do get back problems...

E-mail the author at lilyge_pal@yahoo.com

Rizza Samson

Color! Not only can it make a simple outfit strikingly memorable and memorable, color can made terrible look in a thousand different ways. Color, for me, ignites my mood and emotions. As artist Georgia O'Keeffe said, "I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for."

Jo Ann Bitagcol

I always accessorize a simple outfit with an interesting pair of shoes, a big watch and quirky jewelry like crocheted leather bracelet with artificial flowers. Accessorizing is the most effective way to show who you are.

Nicolette Bell

It makes a lot of difference when an outfit is worn with confidence. Generally, people have a tendency to notice an individual's physique and another's attire more than what she is actually wearing. For example, two people wearing the same outfit will be seen in different ways. The one who exudes an aura of confidence will look more beautiful than the other.

Raya Manangan

I personally love to accessorize with earrings—the bigger, the better! From chandelier to mono earrings, they're sure to spruce up any outfit, be it a tracksuit, a bikini or a little black dress.

The best thing about them, too, is that you don't have to spend too much to feel like a million bucks. I got these black gold hoops in Hong Kong for only Hong Kong dollars and the cuff for P500 at a mangga in Cebu.

Accessorizing according to . . .

Isabel Roces

Try: wacky shoes, bags and accessories with colors that contrast with your outfit, preferably awesome-but-not-ludicrous shoes; nothing that are more vibrant. If you're in a white tee and jeans, you can add a yellow cap or a wildly printed bag. Always remember that dressing up should be fun.

Continued on page 4-B

almost with the issue in fashion.

What's more, it's always a treat to watch young ice should I say "younger") models transform from inexperienced newbies to graceful, confident pros. Models are known to be the ultimate fashionistas, so it's always interesting to watch how they put together outfits and how they put a touch of personality to whatever they are wearing.

So, in between fittings, rehearsals, having our hair and make-up done and doing the show, I took candid pictures of them and asked them to share with us the best way to accessorize a basic outfit.

Here are their sensible answers, which I hope will inspire you to express yourselves through your manner of dressing and choice of accessories.

E-mail the author at spandrea@hotmail.com

E-mail us

E-mail all contributions, press releases and announcements to: lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph.

Lifestyle has the option but not the obligation to publish any e-mailed information.

Photos should be attached to JPEG format or submitted on CD or diskette completely explained.

AMBUSH INTERVIEW

Accessorizing according to supermodels

I FOUND myself in the twilight zone last week. In an uncanny twist of events, I, a certified ex-model, ended up running around doing rehearsals and shows and a pictorial, to boot.

I was a bit hesitant to accept the proposal that were offered to me, but the lure of wearing stunningly beautiful jewelry by Bulgari and then, Dagger, plus, a fabulous ball gown by designer Rhett Eala proved to be too strong. And although there are certain things that made me wonder why I ever decided to wear the catwalk again (the long waiting in between makeup and the show, for one), the benefits far outweighed the disadvantages.

It's always such a high to be around creative individuals like director Jackie Aquino and stylist Patrick Tiano, who are partly responsible for quite a number of Manila's world-class productions. Plus, it's a great way to keep

ACCESSORIZING 12

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Alferez-Sodhecare

Bianca Valerio

There are many ways to accessorize for a basic outfit depending on the mood and/or occasion. One way would be by wearing a jacket or coat. Depending on the style and material, it can either dress up or down any ensemble.

Another way is to add a burst of color or print through your choice of shoes, bags, belts or jewelry. It adds an element of fun and breaks the monotony.

There are much more ways but the best accessory is confidence. That's one thing that can't be mimicked nor bought. It definitely makes you stand out.

Ana Lhorna

Three key points to remember: Be...sociated keep an eye on the latest trends. Two: experiment and be playful! Three: be confident! You have to believe in yourself to...